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The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent.

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"KIRSTEEN," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLII.

WHEN the ladies got back to the Dower House, Letitia's letter was awaiting them. Agnes had not known what to say on the way. She had maintained the little fiction of the headache, with which Mary sympathized tenderly, and lay back in the corner of the carriage wondering what she should, what she could do. Endure for this night, at least—that expedient which is always the nearest to a woman—and in the morning, on some pretence, with some excuse which did not yet occur to her, go in her own person and see for herself. This was all that Agnes could decide upon. And when she reached home Letitia's letter was the first thing that met her eye. She devoured it, standing in the hall, while Mary went in. A letter which carries a sentence of death may look as little important as a letter which conveys an invitation to tea, and Mary made no inquiries. That she should pass tranquilly through the hall and go into the drawing-room, while Agnes was reading of her only child's illness, struck her sister as a hideous cruelty and want of heart. She had said to herself she would disturb Mary no more, she would not attempt to awaken the feeling which had lain so long dormant, which surely was now beyond hope. But it was as a bitter offence and wrong to Agnes when Lady Frogmore went past her with a cheerful word to the maid who came to take her shawl, and a mind entirely at ease while Mar's fate was being sealed. For Letitia's letter left very little doubt as to the boy's fate.

"I will let you know if anything happens. That is—" Agnes said to herself, with a gasp of anguish, "if he dies."

Oh, heaven! and he might be dying now, alone with the trained nurses, nobody near him who loved him! Alas, poor Mar! who was there in the world who loved him? except, perhaps, herself, who had been the only mother his infancy had known, and she was useless to him, unable to do anything for him.

It was a long time before Agnes could face the light and her sister's tranquil looks. She went to her room and fell on her knees and prayed with that passionate remonstrance and appeal, and almost reproach, with which we fly to God when He seems about to cut off from us the thing we hold most dear—pleading, putting forth every argument, reasoning with the Supreme Disposer of events, arguing and explaining to Him how it could not, must not be—as we all do, when prayer, which is so often a mere formality, becomes the outcry of mortal disquietude. The tears which she shed, the struggle which she went through exhausted her so, that for the moment her misery was weakened with her strength. Mary, waiting tranquilly for her downstairs, believed that Agnes had lain down a little, her head being so bad, and approved it as the wisest thing to do.

"Don't disturb Miss Hill, she has a bad headache," she said. And so Agnes was left alone to have her struggle out.

"Are you better, dear?" said Mary, in her quiet voice, when her sister came in, in the twilight, just before dinner. Agnes had changed her dress as usual, and in the dim light it was impossible to see how pale she was, and the signs of trouble in her face.

"I have news from Letitia," said Agnes, "bad news—they have illness at the Park. I think I will go to-morrow if you can spare me, Mary, and see for myself."

"At the Park?" Lady Frogmore paused with nervous questions on her lips. Was it Duke? Was it anything infectious? Was it—? She paused, and instinct taught her that her sister's desire to go and see for herself could mean only one thing. The boy—. She never to herself called him anything but the boy, and never thought of him—which she did seldom and unwillingly, never when she could help it—without a strange tremor and sinking at her heart.

"Is it—?" she said, but she could not put even that formula or ask, is it he? "Is it—serious?" she added in a very low voice.

"I think she thinks he is dying—and she wants no one to come—he has two nurses—and she says she will write if anything happens. If anything happens! Oh, my God, my boy! with no one near him that cares for him. I must go to-morrow, Mary."

Lady Frogmore patted her sister's shoulder with her hand. Her own child! and yet it was for Agnes that she felt—for her great trouble. "Yes," she said, "you must go," with a strange piteous tone which her sister did not understand, and indeed in the throng of her own emotions did not perceive.

"She never says a word of sorrow or regret. She is glad, that dreadful woman! Now," cried Agnes, "it will be all hers, she thinks—there will be no one in her way."

"In her way!" Mary said like an echo. They could not see each other's faces. "Ah, that was always what I wished," she said in a subdued tone.

Agnes seized her sister by the shoulders with a grasp which was almost fierce. "You shall not now," she cried, "you shall not now! you shall think of him for once—not Letitia, but good Frogmore's son—dear Frogmore's son. Oh, my boy, my boy!"

She let her sister go, and fell back covering her face with her hands. And Mary sank trembling into her chair. But she made no remonstrance or reply. She did not say anything, but cried a little quietly under the cover of the evening. She was moved, if with nothing else, at least with the profound emotion of her companion. That Agnes should calm herself after this outburst and beg Mary's pardon humbly, and do all that in her lay to appear cheerful for the rest of the evening, it is almost unnecessary to say. She was filled with compunction and tenderness towards the unfortunate mother who knew nothing of maternity. Why should she try to excite and arouse Mary now? Arouse her only to bereavement, to know the misery of loss? Oh no, no! Agnes said to herself. If he must die let not the light of life go out for Mary too; it was enough that, for herself, that bitter anguish must be.

She started very early in the morning, and arrived at the Park while still it was high day. Letitia was out. Mrs. Parke had given up her feverish watch since that day when the doctor had bidden her write to the boy's mother. She had discovered that her health was suffering from confinement and that a little air and change of scene was necessary, as there was really no need for her

and she could do nothing for Mar. She drove about with an eager eye upon the property, observing and deciding what must be done, when all was over, when everything was in their own hands. She went to Westgate, and planned where the new cottages were to be.

"Your father has been tied down in every way," she said to Letty; "he has not been able to carry out his own plans. But now, alas, in all probability that period is over, and he will be able to act for himself——"

"Oh, mamma, what do you mean?" Letty had cried.

"It is very easy to tell what I mean. Poor Mar! though it is dreadful to think of it—it will make a wonderful difference to your father, Letty, when the poor boy is mercifully released——"

"Do you mean," cried Letty, her eyes full of tears and horror, "when Mar, dear Mar dies? Is that the dreadful, dreadful thing that you mean, mamma?"

"My saying it will not make him die a moment sooner, but we must be prepared. That is what is coming, alas! However grieved we may be, that is no reason for shutting our eyes."

"Mamma! do you think it? Do you really believe it? I know he is very ill—but there is a long way between that and—dying. Oh," said Letty, with a shudder, "I cannot, cannot bear it. I will not think it, I will not believe it. What is the good of doctors and nurses, and of all the new things that have been found out, if Mar must die?"

Dreadful question which we have all asked! With neglect and ignorance every terrible loss is, alas! possible; but with all that science and all that care can do, with doctors that discover new methods every day, and nursing that never rests, how is it that still they die? Letty had never faced this question before in her life. She sat by the side of her mother, whose mind was tuned to so different a mood, who was calculating in the fullest impulse of new life and activity what she was going to do—and sobbed out her youthful soul at the first sight of that inevitable fate that kings as well as beggars must pass and cannot escape.

Agnes got out of her humble cab from the station in the middle of the avenue, and walked the rest of the way to the house. Now that she was so near she pushed off the moment of certainty with the instinct of anxiety. The windows were all open; he was living at least, there was still hope. And even that

was a relief. In the hall she found the daily bulletin placed there for inquirers: "No change; strength fairly maintained," which gave her another shock of acute consolation, if such words can be used.

"But I must see him. You know me. I am Lord Frogmore's aunt," she cried. "No, I cannot wait till Mrs. Parke comes in. I must see him. I must see him."

The footman called the butler, who did not know how to stop this impetuous visitor; but before he had appeared Agnes had flown upstairs, feeling a freedom in the absence of Letitia which increased the sense of relief. The nurse came to the door of Mar's room, with her fingers to her lips, as she heard the hasty footsteps. It was the cheerful nurse, the optimist, who thought that young patients recover from everything. She perceived in a moment that this was no formal inquiry, and hastened to say that the patient was "no worse."

"You may think that's not much, but it's a great deal," she added, coming out into the outer room.

"Oh, nurse, God bless you! I thank you with all my heart!" cried poor Agnes, bursting out, but noiselessly, into a passion of tears.

Upon which the cheerful woman shook her head. "We must not go too fast," she said. "He is very bad. But I have never been one that took the worst side. I've seen that kind before; a long, weedy slip of a boy that's outgrown, you would say, his strength. But they're stronger than you think for. I say while there's life there's hope."

Agnes Hill had heard these words often before, as we all have done, and looking up through her grateful tears with a fresh *accès* of misery, she said, "Is that all? Oh, is that all?"

"The doctor gives him the six weeks," said the nurse, pursuing her own line of thought, "but I shouldn't be surprised if there was a change to-morrow or next day. That will be five weeks. I can't tell you why I think it, but one can't be so long with a case without forming an opinion. To-morrow night or early on Thursday morning I shouldn't wonder if the change came."

"Oh, nurse, the change!" said Agnes, clasping her hands, with the full sense of the words flashing on her mind.

"Yes," said the nurse. "I can't say, and no one can say, what change it will be—but I believe the fever will go. And then—it

all depends upon his strength," she added, "and I take the cheerful view."

"You think there is still hope," said Agnes, taking the woman's hands in hers.

"Oh, plenty of hope!" said the optimist. But when the anxious visitor was allowed to come within the door, and from that corner saw Mar lying in the doze in which he spent most of his time, her heart sank within her. Nothing could look more feeble, more like death, as if he were gone already, than the waxen face of the boy, with his dark eyelashes against his cheek. She turned away and put her hands to her eyes, thinking he was already gone. What did it matter what any one said? Hope died with a pang unspeakable in the anxious woman's breast. She came away again without listening to the further words of comfort which the nurse poured into her ears. Comfort—what comfort was there possible when he lay there, gone, wasted to a shadow, shrunken to nothing, with those wide circles round his eyes, and the blue veins like streaks of colour? Agnes said to herself she had seen too many to deceive herself. She knew, whatever any one might say.

As she came down again to the hall, Letitia's carriage arrived at the door. Though Agnes was so hopeless and so entirely convinced that nothing could now avail, the sound of the carriage wheels on the gravel made her shrink and glow with indignation, as if the noise might harm him. The first words she said to Mrs. Parke were of reproach :

"Couldn't you drive round another way, not to disturb him?" she said.

"Ah, you have come to see our poor Mar. No, dear boy, we don't disturb him. Nothing has disturbed him for a long, long time, alas!" said Letitia.

The mournful motion of her head, her measured tones of fictitious grief, gave Agnes an impulse to strike her, as a brutal man might have done, upon the lying mouth.

"Oh, Aunt Agnes," cried Letty, "stay, stay! Don't go away." There was no possibility of doubting the sincerity of Letty's wet eyes and tear-stained face.

"I am afraid I cannot ask you to do that," said Letitia. "If it had been Mary—— But there are too many people already in the house. And you could do Mar no good, Agnes: in all likeli-

hood he will never recognize anybody—he will just sleep away. And the agitation is more than I can bear. And at such a moment it is best there should be nobody in the house but the family alone."

"I am his mother's sister," said Agnes painfully.

"But such a mother! who has never spoken to him, never acknowledged him, would have turned him out of his rights if she could. No, he must be left now to those who have cared for him all his life."

"Oh, Letitia," she cried, in her misery, "and have you nothing to blame yourself with in that? Is your conscience clear? Don't you remember, as we all do—as we all did—for most of them are gone?" she cried, wringing her hands.

Letitia looked at her, opening her eyes wide, then gave her daughter a glance of appeal, and shook her head.

"Poor thing!" she said. "Poor Agnes! it has been too much for her. This dreadful mental weakness is in the family. Tell one of the men, Letty, to get ready to take her to the station. My poor Agnes, rest here a little, and Thomas shall take you to the train."

Agnes said not a word more. She turned and hastened away, almost running to get into the shelter of her cab before the storm of wretchedness and fierce indignation, which she could scarcely keep silent so long, should burst forth. And now she was about to triumph in her wickedness, this cruel, terrible woman! The stars in their courses fought for her. Mar's innocent young life, and Mary's reason, and all the misery that had been, were but steps in her advancement. And now she had all but reached the climax of her life.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AGNES got home so late that she did not see Mary that evening. And next day there was not very much conversation between them. Lady Frogmore could see by her sister's looks that she had not very cheerful news to give. She said with a sort of new-born timidity, "I hope things are better than you thought," to which Agnes made no reply but by shaking her head. It rained that day. One of those soft, long-continued summer rains which pour down from morning to night without any hope of change, refreshing and restoring everything that had begun to

droop in the too vivid sun, but shutting the doors of the house against the all-pervading moisture, and making all rambles impossible. Few things are more depressing to a heart already deeply weighted than this persistent rain. The grey of the sky, the patter on the leaves, the monotony of the long hours increases every burden. Even in the happiest circumstances the prisoners indoors long for something to happen, for somebody to come. And it may be believed that to Agnes in the fever of her anxiety every hour seemed a year long. This night or to-morrow might be the decisive time. The secrets of life or death were in those slowly passing moments, the balance slowly moving to one side or another. She went through all her so-called duties, the little domestic things she had to do, the little nothings that seemed, oh, so unimportant, so futile, in face of the great thing that was about to be decided. She asked herself how she could endure to do them, to order the little dinner, to superintend the little economies while Mar lay dying. But had she been with Mar, what could she have done? Sat and looked on in the most desperate suspense, still able to do nothing for him, to do nothing for anybody, to wait only till the end should come.

There came a moment, however, when the courage of Agnes failed, and she could bear it no more. She told her sister again that she had a headache—a pretence which Mary seemed to understand, asking no questions—and would go early to bed. But she did not go to bed. It seemed something to sit up, to accompany the vigil of the nurse, the possibility of the change, with the intensity of feeling if not of presence. When Agnes closed her eyes she seemed to see the whole scene—the room with its shaded light, the wasted form scarcely visible in the bed; the nurse—a silent figure—watching the long hours through. She did not know that the nurse who was then with the boy was one who did not hope—which was a thing which would have added heaviness to the vigil had she known it. She had not the heart to go to bed. It seemed somehow as if she were doing something for him to sit up and count the hours and spend her soul in broken breaths of prayer. Oh, how broken, how interrupted with a hundred fantastic uncontrollable imaginations! Still, it was something to join herself to the vigil, if no more.

She was so absorbed in her own deep anxiety and thoughts that she did not hear any movement in the house, and thought

nothing but that the household was asleep and hushed at its usual early hour. And when she heard a stealthy step come to her door after midnight, Agnes's mind was so confused from reality by that vigil that she sprang up with a breathless terror lest it might be the nurse coming to call her to tell her the change had come, and that Mar's life was fading away. She made a swift step to the door and opened it, unable to speak; but only found Lady Frogmore's maid outside with an anxious face.

"Oh, Miss Hill, I'm so glad you're up," she said; "I wish you would come to my lady—she is not herself at all. I can't tell what is the matter with her."

"Hasn't she gone to bed, Ford?"

"I got her to bed, ma'am, quite comfortable I thought; but I stopped about doing little things, for I saw she was wakeful; and then all at once she got up and called me and caught me by the arm. 'Ford,' she says, looking in my face very serious, 'who was it that said, May he grow up an idiot and kill you? Who was it, who was it?' 'Oh, my lady, I don't know,' I said; 'I never heard the words before.' 'It was a dreadful thing to say,' she cries, always looking at me. 'Ford, do you think words like that ever come true?' Perhaps I was too bold, Miss Hill; but I spoke up and said: 'No, my lady, I'm sure they don't; for if they did, God Almighty would be putting us in the power of the worst and dreadfulest—and He would never do that.' 'No, Ford, He would never do that,' she said, with the tears in her dear eyes. Oh, Miss Hill, there's some change coming. I don't know what it is. And now she's trying all her keys upon that box we brought from the Park. We've not been able to find one that would open it; but I got another bunch just now, and while she was busy I thought I'd come and call you. Don't be frightened, Miss Hill. I don't think it's a change for the worse."

"Oh, Ford," said Agnes, "it is just the bitterness of life. It's a change that will come too late. Oh, my boy! it must be his dear spirit that is moving his mother's heart."

"Let's hope it's something better than that. Let's hope it means good news," said the woman, who knew a great deal of the family in her long service, and nearly, if not all, its mysteries. But Agnes, whose heart was very heavy, only shook her head. When she went into her sister's room Mary was standing against the light, a white figure wrapped in a white dressing-gown. Her

partial confusion of mind, the subdued and quiet life she had led, her exemption from strong emotions, had kept an air of comparative youth about her. Her hair was partially grey, but it gave no appearance of age to the face, which had the appearance of one purified and refined from earthliness by long misfortune and trouble. She had lighted a number of candles, which encircled her with light, and was standing looking down into the box, which was open on the table, with a strange air of tremulous discovery, indecision, terror, and joy, like one who has found out some astonishing thing which she cannot believe, yet knows to be true. She turned half round with a warning movement, as if begging not to be disturbed, then suddenly putting out her hand drew Agnes close to her.

"What is that? Do you know what it is?" she said.

The only answer Agnes made was with a burst of tears. "Oh, Mary! oh, my dear! my dear!" she cried.

A smile was on Mary's face—a strange, tender smile, full of all the softness of her veiled and gentle soul. She took out something tenderly and reverently, as if it had been a sacred thing. The curious nurse, peering behind these two absorbed women, expecting to see some mystery, felt herself to come down from imaginative poetic heights to the commonest familiar ground when she saw what it was. Ford almost laughed with the surprise, but dared not, so strong was the sensation of passionate feeling that seemed to fill the air. What Lady Frogmore took from the box was the first little garment that is ever put upon a child. A little film of lawn, not much more; the most delicate and softest of fabrics made to fold over the delicate body, in exquisite softness and whiteness, as if the finest fairy web of earth had been chosen to wrap the little thing newborn, come from among the angels. It was unfinished—a narrow line of very fine lace only half-sewn round the little sleeves. Mary took it up and held it in her hands, spread out upon them. Oh, what soft suggestions of trembling happiness, of wonderful anticipation, of tender mystery, and dreams were in it!

"What is this?" she said, in a whisper; "tell me what it is."

Agnes had put her arms round her sister, leaning upon her—she who was usually the strong one, the supporter and prop—and laid her head on Mary's shoulder. The sight of the little tender relic, so familiar, so full of suggestion on this night of fate,

overcame her altogether. Oh, to think of the infant for whom that little wrapper of softness had been made ; whom his mother, who had made it with such holy and tender thoughts, had never known ; who was lying now between life and death—perhaps, having crossed the awful boundary, lingering near them, breathing into her long-closed and stupefied heart. Agnes could make no answer. She sobbed convulsively upon her sister's shoulder. "Oh, my baby, my boy, my little Mar, my little Mar !" she cried, with a poignant tone of anguish which pierced the soft air, the soft silence of the night, like something keen and terrible, a sharp blade and point of passionate human feeling.

Mary held up the stronger woman with a rally of her own strength, but did not move otherwise. Her eyes were full of tears, but there was no anguish in them. She said in a low voice, like the coo of a dove, "No one need tell me. I know. It was I who made it for my baby—my baby ! And he was born. I remember now everything. The old mother was there—my mother—don't you know—and so proud. And my old lord, my dear old lord—with his heir—— Agnes, Agnes !" she cried suddenly, "what have you done to me, to keep me so long from my boy ?"

Agnes sank down upon her knees on the floor. She held up her clasped hands as if she were praying to the white figure that stood over her. "It can do no harm now," she cried. "What does it matter if we all go mad ! I think I shall: to see her remember him, to see her find out the truth too late—too late ! Oh, God, that I should have my answer now when it is all over. It would have been better if there had been no answer—no answer now."

"Agnes," said Mary, gently laying a hand upon her head—she held the precious little garment in her other hand, and kissed it, pressing it to her lips and her cheek—"Agnes," she said in her soft voice, pitying her sister's emotion, "I do not blame you, dear. I have been kept in the dark, I don't know why ; I have done many strange things not knowing. Perhaps my—my baby—my boy has been injured ; God forbid ! But I don't blame you, dear. If he has been injured we can put it right. All can be put right, now we know. You meant it, I am sure, for the best. Agnes, I never, never will blame you, dear. Oh, rise up now and tell me, tell me all you have kept from me ; tell me everything about my boy."

"I think God has taken him," cried Agnes on her knees. "This was the night—I think he must be here to have found his way to his mother's heart. Oh, Mar, Mar! if you are dead, if you hear, say something; let us see you one moment, one moment before you go to heaven. One moment, one moment, Mar!"

The maid, who was standing by, and whom these words froze with terror, thought to her dying day that she had heard—something she knew not what, like the passing of a soft footstep, like a subdued breath, and would have turned and fled had she not thought herself safer in the room with the lights than in the dark passages outside. This impulse of terror was stopped in Ford's mind by the look her mistress gave her—which was a look which Ford had exchanged with many persons over Lady Frogmore's own head—a look of pity and appeal, consulting her what was to be done for the distracted woman at their feet. This curious turning of the tables stupefied Ford. It was as if an infant from its cradle had turned and bid its nurse care for its mother.

"All this has been too much for her," said Lady Frogmore. "Help me to put her in my bed, Ford. She and I have always been together. We slept together when we were two little girls in the old Vicarage. Agnes, let me lift you, dear; don't strain yourself or take any trouble. We'll stay together this wonderful night. And when you're able you tell me—let me lift you first—"

"You!" cried Agnes, stumbling somehow to her feet. She added in a humble tone, coming to herself, "I have forgotten my duty, Mary. Don't think any more of me. It was more than I could bear, just for a moment."

"Yes, I saw it was too much. Ford, do you think you could sleep on the sofa, just to be at hand if we wanted anything? I am not easy about her still. We'll stay together to-night. Lie down and I will sit by you, and when you are able you will tell me—"

"My lady, it would be much better for you to get your natural rest."

"Mary, you must not sit up with me!"

"And why not, I should like to know?" said Mary. "Don't you know I'm very happy to-night? Don't you know I've found it out—what has been on my mind so long? I knew there was something. I have never said anything to you, but it has been,

oh, so heavy on my mind! Something, something that had gone away from me that I could not get back, and when I dreamt of my lord he was always frowning, always angry. Agnes! I was making this, and mother sitting as there, and you pouring out tea, when—we were all very happy—I remember my thread breaking just there, when I had nearly finished. And I turned to take another, and—then there was something that happened before—before he was born."

"He was born that night," cried Agnes; "God bless him!" She was very pale, and her eyes had become dry and shone as if with fever. In her mind there was a deep wonder whether Mar heard her, whether it would please him, though he was dead, to have the story of his infancy told to his mother. And with this half-distracted thought came one that was quite real, quite rational—the anxious determination to shut out all reference to Letitia's visit from the still wavering mind of her sister; to keep that which was the key of all that followed from her recollection if possible.

"He was born that night—God bless him!" said Mary slowly. Then she added, "I remember a cluster of people bending over him, and the light on father's bald head, and my dear old lord with his face down quite close, and the doctor standing saying something about the child. And then—and then—what happened? I remember no more."

"You were very ill, oh, very ill; so ill that—oh," said Agnes, "don't make me think of that terrible time."

"Ah!" said Mary, a quiet seriousness coming over her face, though her lips still smiled, "you thought I was going to die."

Agnes made no reply.

"But even that," said Lady Frogmore, "was not enough to make you all deceive me so cruelly. No, no, my dear, I did not mean cruelly. You must have thought it for the best. Was there ever such a thing before that a woman should live and never know? Do you remember what the Bible says, 'Can a woman forget her child, that she should not remember—' Oh," cried the poor soul, "what you have taken from me! How much you have robbed me of!" She paused a moment with her hands clasped, with the consciousness of wrong on her face. Then that sterner mood died away in the old sweet way of making the best of it, which Agnes remembered with a melt-

ing of her heart had always been Mary's way. "Never mind," she said. "Never mind. I know now, and you meant it all for the best."

CHAPTER XLIV.

MARY sat by the bed in which Agnes lay for nearly half the night. She was so determined on this strange arrangement that her sister had to yield, and as long as the darkness lasted, which in July moves slowly, much more than in June, the conversation went on. Ford lay on the sofa in a distant corner and slept soundly, but neither of the ladies had any inclination to sleep. It distracted the thoughts of Agnes from the possible awful importance of this night in Mar's life to tell Mar's mother everything that had happened, dwelling as briefly as possible upon the illness which had separated Mary from her child, and endeavouring to blur over as best she could the blank which that illness had left behind in Mary's mind. It was indeed a very broken story, in which a stranger wanting information would have seen the most serious gaps and deficiencies. But to Mary the interest of the details in which Agnes took refuge to avoid the more serious questions was so great that it was always possible to carry her past a dangerous point, and the murmurs of the two voices going on all through the night, low, breathed into each other's ears, was more like the whisperings of two girls over their little secrets of love than the clearing up of what was almost a tragedy, the revelation of the strangest, troubrous story. Mary herself was lost in a still vague and tremulous joy, all innocent and soft as the little garment that had been the happy cause of it, possessing as yet no complications, realizing nothing but that she had been proved to have the dearest of all possessions to a woman—a child, a baby, who to her thoughts was a baby still, and at present linked himself but dimly to any idea of further developments. To be told that he was Mar still gave little enlightenment to her mind, which did not know Mar. Something that could be wrapped still in that little film of innermost apparel—although it was at the same time something which could consciously respond to her affection, reflect his father's image as Agnes said he did—something that was at once a loving human creature and an infant entirely her own. This was Mary's conception of the child whom she had

discovered as if it had been a jewel that was lost. She took it sweetly, quietly, as was natural to her gentle soul. Happily it had come without any harsh discovery, in the gentlest way, and as yet there seemed nothing but happiness in the lifting of the veil, the opening up of the old life. Mary cried as she listened, shedding many soft tears. Her eyes shone behind them with joy and peace. She had found what she had lost. No more would her old lord frown upon her in her dream; no more would she feel that imperfection, that something which she could not understand, the mystery which had haunted her life, though she did not know what it was. She could not, perhaps would not (for even in this feeble state there is some moral control) allow herself to think further. It was enough that she had come out of the darkness, and that the light was sweet. When the daylight began to come in at the window and make the candles pale, Lady Frogmore rose, as light and serviceable as if it had not been she who had been surrounded with such anxious cares for so many years, and placed upon such a platform of weakness and disadvantage. She was not weak nor at any disadvantage now. Her maid slept. Her sister, who had ministered to her all these years lay silent, looking on while she put out the candles and closed the shutter on the window.

"I am coming to bed," she said, "if you will make room for me, Agnes; not because I am tired, for I could sit and hear of him for ever, but because we must be early astir to-morrow, and I suppose rest is necessary. I don't feel any need of it," she said with a soft laugh. "None at all. I feel young and strong as if I could do anything. I feel about twenty, Agnes. But make a little room and I think I shall sleep. It is like old times," she said as she took her place by her sister's side, "like old, old times, when the little girls were always together. Do you remember the time when we two were the little girls?"

They kissed each other laughing and crying over that old recollection. How long, how long ago? And all life had passed since then, and here they were, two sisters growing old, with wrinkles upon the faces which the early light revealed, despising all the tender fictions of the night. Mary soon slept as she had said, fearing nothing, innocent in the discovery she had made. She fell asleep like a child with the light of the summer morning glowing on her face. But Agnes could not sleep. When her

sister's regular breathing showed the deep repose in which she was wrapped, Agnes stole out of bed and went to the furthest window where there was a glimmer of the rising sun, and knelt down there in the dawning ray turning her face towards the east. Why she could not have told. To turn her face towards the east was no spell, there was nothing in that to secure that her prayers should be heard. And it could not be said that she prayed. Her soul and body were both worn out. She knelt there silent, her head bowed in her hands. The new day was bringing life or death to Mar—which was it bringing, life or death? She knelt on silent, like an image of devotion. It was something at least to await that crisis, when it should come, upon her knees.

Lady Frogmore slept till it was late, long after Agnes had dressed and come upstairs again to await at her bedside her sister's awakening, with a little anxiety after all the excitement of the night. Mary had lain very still; she had not moved for hours, and was sleeping like a child. But when she began to give signs of waking her appearance changed. She moved about uneasily, her face contracted as if with pain; she put out her hands as if appealing to some one. Suddenly she sprang up broad awake in her bed. "Ford!" she cried, and then, "Agnes!" as she perceived her sister. Her breath came quick, a look of terror came over her face. "Who was it," she cried—"who was it that said, 'May he grow up an idiot, and kill you!' Who was it, Agnes?"

"Oh, my lady, my lady!" cried Ford, from the other side of the bed.

"Mary! don't think of that, for God's sake."

"Who was it?" she cried. "It was to me it was said."

"Oh, my lady," said Ford, "don't think of such dreadful things."

"'May he grow up an idiot, and kill you!' It was said to me—it was a curse upon my baby—my child. Who said it, Agnes? You know."

"Oh, Mary, what does it matter now? What harm could such wicked words do to any one? Yes—yes, it is true. Mary, I ought not to tell you—it was Letitia. Oh, what does it matter now?"

Mary pushed her away, flinging herself out of bed. "Not matter! Ford, let me dress at once. Order the carriage. Tell me what is the first train. We must go at once by the first train."

"Where, Mary? Oh, my dear, where?"

"She asks me where," cried Lady Frogmore, appealing in her excitement to the maid. "She asks me where, and she knows my boy is in that woman's hands—my child in that woman's hands. She said, 'May he grow up an idiot'—my child, my baby! and he is in her hands. Oh, quick, quick, give me my things! Order the carriage! There is a train, early, that we went by before. Oh, the slow, horrible train it is, I remember, stopping everywhere; but at least don't let us lose it now."

"Is it to the Park you are going, Mary?"

"Where else?" cried Lady Frogmore; "is not my child there, and in her hands?"

She was too impatient to accept the usual services of her maid, but dressed herself in wild haste, her trembling hands tying strings and fastening buttons all wrong. Her two attendants could do little but look on, as in her agitation she snatched at everything. The gentle Mary, always so tranquil and mild, was transfigured with passion and eagerness. When she heard that it was too late for the morning train it was a shriek rather than a cry which burst from her breast. "Oh, why did you let me sleep? Why did I sleep?" she cried bitterly. There was no possibility of calming her, no means of explaining how they had arranged everything for her comfort that she might rest after her unusual excitement and exhaustion. She rest! Mary, who had been the object of unceasing care for years, whose every mood had been considered, and from whom everybody near warded and kept off any possible shade of annoyance, forgot all that in a moment. She became the Mary of old, she who was Letitia's right hand, she who spared no trouble, who thought of everybody but herself. Mary was as much surprised at being the first to be thought of, at having her rest cared for, as if that long time of care and observance had never been. "Rest for me!" she cried, "you should have known better, Agnes—you might have known I should not rest till I had seen my boy." She woke without a cloud upon her memory of that fact, but with this new dread sprung up in her mind which could not be calmed down.

They set off in time for a later train after a weary interval of waiting, an interval that seemed to both as if it would never end. Mary had been seized in the new sense of motherhood

with a panic and fear of alarm which nothing could quench. She who had forgiven everything to Letitia, who had thought of nothing either in her madness or her recovery but the interests of her former friend, now feared her as if she were a criminal, and felt that every moment the heir remained in her hands was a moment of danger. "She will do him no harm," Agnes tried to say. "She is not kind. She does not love him, but she will do him no harm." Mary would not listen to this voice of reason. The woman who had wished that the unborn child should grow up an idiot and kill his parents appeared in no light but that of a possible murderer to her who had newly discovered his existence and that she was his mother. She waved off her sister's soothing words. She put Agnes herself—Agnes who had loved him always, who had been his first guardian, all the mother he had ever known—in a secondary place, as one who could not divine the passion of the mother love. "It is easy for you to speak," she said, crying out in her impatience that the horses crept, that they would be too late for the train, and then that the train itself was like a country cart, and would not go. Then there came those long waitings at the junction, the interval between one little country conveyance and another. The rain of yesterday had all passed away. The day was bright, illuminating the face of the country, mocking at the heaviness of the travellers. Lady Frogmore was flushed and eager, full of inquiry, walking about during the times of waiting, explaining to everybody that she was going to her son, to bring him home, to the great confusion of those who knew her story, and knew too that Mar lay dying. Her acquaintances looked at her with trouble and suspicion, looked anxiously aside at Ford, who followed her mistress about as she walked up and down. Had poor Lady Frogmore's brain given way again? was what they asked each other with their eyes. But it was none of their business, and there was no one important enough to interfere.

As for Agnes, she was incapable of any activity. When she was permitted to be quiet for a moment there fell upon her heart the other dreadful burden which Mary had not understood, which Agnes shrank from insisting upon. Was it all too late, too late, a terrible irony of Providence which sometimes seems to keep the word of promise to the ear, as well as the pagan fates, to give when the gift is no longer of any use? Was his mother hurry-

ing in all the new passion of her love and trust to find no child, no son, but only what was mortal, the poor cast-off garment of flesh that had once been her boy? Was it all over—that struggle? or had it perhaps ended, as the nurse hoped, in life and not in death? As she approached the time when she should know, Agnes' mind began to play with this hope: tremulous gleams of happiness and possibility flashing before her eyes, which she dared not receive or dwell upon, but which came to her without any will of hers, flaming through the dark, lighting up the skies, then sinking into greater gloom than ever. While Mary walked about in the intervals of waiting, Agnes sat out of sight in the most retired corner she could find, dumb and faint with the awful suspense. She could not communicate to her sister what she feared, yet feared doubly for the consequence to Mary if in the heat of her newly awakened feeling she should come suddenly against that thick blank of loss. Oh, to forestall the wrong turn, to know what a few hours might bring forth—happiness, the perfection of being, a new life, a brighter world—or madness, misery, and death? Thus the one sister sat dumb and incapable of speech, her throat dry and her lips parched, while the other, all energy and eagerness, soothed her impatience by movement and eager communication of her purpose—going to find her boy.

The railways have almost annihilated distance, everybody says—and it is true. But when a succession of slow country trains on cross lines have to be gone through, with many pauses, stoppages, and changes, there is nothing which gives the same impression of delay and miserable tardiness. To hasten for a little time towards your end, and then to stop and spend as long a time or longer in aimless waiting, repeating the same again and again in an afternoon's journey! No waggon on the country road seems to be so slow, so lingering, so impossible to quicken. It was dark when they arrived at the nearest station to the Park, and then a long interval followed before they could obtain the broken-down, rattling, clattering country fly which drove them six miles further to the Park. It was all that Agnes's lips could do to utter an inquiry, "How is Lord Frogmore?" when the keeper of the lodge awoke up out of his first sleep, stumbled forth to open the gate, half reluctant to admit visitors at such an hour. "I think I heard as the young lord's a bit better," said the yawning lodge-keeper. Her heart leapt up, almost choking her in her

sudden relief. But how did she dare to trust this indifferent outsider, who cared nothing? At least, at least, he lived still, which was much. Mary had grown quite silent in the excitement of the arrival. She put her hand into her sister's, and grasped it as if to keep herself up, but said nothing. They dismounted out of the noisy fly at the end of the avenue, Mary obeying the impulse of Agnes, asking no reason. There were still lights about the upper windows, and a glimmer in the hall, the door of which was opened to them by a servant who was in waiting, and who at first looked as if he would refuse them admittance, but gave way at the sight of the two ladies. He gave Agnes in a subdued whisper the bulletin, "A little better—fever diminished," which in the instantaneous and unspeakable relief took all strength and power to move from her after all her sufferings. She leaned back upon Ford, nearly fainting, her eyes closing, her limbs refusing to support her. In that moment Lady Frogmore drew her hand from her sister's. She asked no questions. No weakness or sinking of heart or courage was in her. She neither looked nor spoke to any one round her, but swiftly detaching herself, throwing off her cloak, disappeared up the great, partially-lighted staircase as swift and as noiseless as a ghost.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE day after the hurried visit of Agnes to the Park had been one of gathering darkness and exhaustion to the young sufferer. He was so ill and had been ill so long that the interest of the household had almost come to an end. There was nothing to be done for him, not even the beef-tea to prepare—the variety of drinks which had kept up a certain link of service between the sick room and the rest of the house. All that seemed over. He had passed from the necessities of life while still living, and now there was nothing but a half-impatient waiting—a longing of strained nerves and attention for the end of the suspense—till all should be over, and the little tale told out.

Letitia, who felt herself the chief person involved, did not feel even impatient that day. It was by this time a foregone conclusion, a question of time. The doctor even had said scarcely anything, had only shaken his head, and even the cheerful nurse, the woman of daylight and good hope, was daunted, and did not repeat her better auguries. John, who had avoided his wife, who

had refused to discuss the subject, now let her speak, sitting with his head bent on his breast, and making little reply, but still listening to what she said. She had a great many plans, indeed had drawn out in her active mind a whole scheme of proceedings for their future guidance, of changes to be made both for pleasure and profit, things of much more importance than these alterations in the house on which she had set her mind the first time she came into it. Letitia spoke low, but she spoke boldly, bidding her husband remember that, though it was very sad, it was a thing that had always been necessary to look forward to, and that after all it was his just inheritance that was now coming to him. And John had not stopped her to-day. It was all true enough. The poor boy had been an interruption to the course of events, and now things were returning to their natural course. He had a soft heart, and it was sore for the poor boy; but Letitia had reason on her side, and what she said was not to be refuted or despised.

She was very busy that day, not going out for her drive or receiving any visitors, not even any of the anxious inquirers who came to beg for a little more information than the bulletin gave—the clerical people about, and the nearest neighbours, whom hitherto she had allowed to enter—very busy in her own room planning out a great many things. It would make a change to everybody—a different style of living, a great extension and amplification would now not only be possible, but necessary. She put it all down on paper, making out her arrangements systematically, which was an exercise that she loved. If the poor boy lingered for a week longer, that would make no difference after all. She had promised to Duke to send for him if Mar became worse; but she decided that she would not do so, for what would be the good? Mar was far too weak to take an interest in any one, perhaps even to recognize his cousin. And Letitia felt that she could not bear the noisy grief with which her son would no doubt receive the news, which was the best news for him that could possibly be. It was bad enough to see Letty with her red eyes moping about the house, and Tiny devoting herself to her lessons as if the mortification of her soul over them was more appropriate to the crisis than anything she cared for. Little fools! who did not know what was to their advantage! But even to them it would not make the difference it would make to Duke. For Duke

there could be no doubt it was the one thing to be desired ; yet Letitia knew he would make a greater fuss than even the girls were doing, and this she could not bear.

Next morning she was a little later than usual in leaving her room. She had not slept well. Her mind had been so full of all that she had to do. It was not anxiety that kept her awake, for anxiety had almost left her in the certainty of what was going to happen ; but merely the pre-occupation of her mind and the responsibility on her shoulders of seeing that everything was done in this emergency so as to secure the approval of the world. Though her mind was full of exultation, she was most anxious not to show it, not to be spoken of as heartless or worldly. A slight fear that she had committed herself to the attendants of the sick room, and that they had penetrated her true feelings, troubled her a little ; but what did a couple of nurses matter ? She was so late that morning that she did not as usual see the night nurse with her lugubrious countenance, shaking her head as she went to take her necessary rest. Letitia liked the night nurse best. She had always thought the other too hopeful ; but what did it matter now what one thought or the other ? She went direct to the sick room when she left her own, putting on as she went the necessary solemnity of countenance with which to receive what there would be no doubt would be bad news. It startled her a little to hear an unusual murmur of voices in the ante-room where the doctor was in the habit of pausing to give his directions. She could not hear what they said, but there was something in the tone of the consultation which struck her, like a sudden dart thrown from some unseen hand. What did it mean ? She went into the room quickly, her composure disturbed, though she would not allow herself to think there was any reason. What reason could there be ? The first thing Letitia saw was the nurse crying—the cheerful nurse—the fool of an optimist who had always said he would get better. Ah ! all was over, then ? This woman had the folly to allow herself to get interested in the case ; and, besides, might well be crying, too, for the end of a good job. A spirit of malice and fierce opposition somehow sprung up in Letitia's mind, and prompted this mean thought. Yes, it was the end of a good job, of good feeding and good pay, and very easy work. No wonder she cried ; and to make herself interesting, too, in the doctor's eyes. This flashed through Mrs. Parke's mind in a second, while

she was walking into the room. It broke up her calm, but rather with a fierce impulse of impatience and desire to take the hussy by the shoulders than with any real fear.

The doctor was stooping over the table writing a prescription. A prescription! What did they want with such a thing now? He looked up when he heard her step. His face was beaming. He put down his pen and came forward, holding out both hands. "I have the best of news for you this morning, my dear lady," he said.

Letitia was too much startled to speak. She would not, could not permit herself to believe her eyes. She drew her hands impatiently from his clasp.

"The crisis has come—and passed," he said. "The fever has gone. I find his temperature almost normal, and the pulse quite quiet."

"What?" said Letitia. She would not believe her ears. She had no time to regulate her countenance to look as if she were glad. Her jaw fell, her eyes glared. "What?" she said, and she could say no more.

"I do not wonder you are overcome. I feel myself as if it were too much. Sit down and take a moment to recover——"

She sat mechanically and glared at him.

Her feeling was that if there had been a knife on the table she would have struck at him with it—a sharp one, that would have turned that smile into a grimace and made an end of it. Too much! The fever gone, *gone!* She panted for breath, fiercely, like a wild beast.

"It is wonderful, but it is true," said Dr. Barker. He added after a moment, "It is curious the different ways we take it. This good little woman, who always hoped the best—cries—and you, Mrs. Parke, you——"

"Do you mean that he will live?" Letitia said.

"I hope so—I hope so. The only danger now is weakness: if we can feed him up and keep him quiet. It is all a question of strength——"

"You have said that ever since you were called in."

"Ah, yes, that is true, but in a different sense. Strength to struggle with a fever is one thing; strength to pick up when it is gone is another. Yesterday, every moment the fire was flaming, burning out his life—now every moment is a gain. Look at him.

He's asleep. He hasn't been asleep, to call sleeping—not honest sleep—for days and nights."

All this was but as the blowing of the wind to Letitia. She did not hear the words. She heard only over and over again, "The fever is gone—" But by this time she had begun to call her strength to her, to remember dully that she must not betray herself. She interrupted the doctor in the midst of his phrase.

"Do you mean that he will live?" she said again.

"As long, I hope," said the doctor, promptly, "as his best friends could desire."

"I don't seem to understand," Letitia said. "I thought all hope was over. I thought he was dying. Why did you make me think so—and my husband too?"

"I am sorry if I have given you unnecessary pain, Mrs. Parke—"

"Oh, unnecessary! it is all unnecessary, I suppose. You have—you have frightened us for nothing, Dr. Barker: given us such days—and nights." She broke into a little wild laugh. "And all the time there was nothing in it!" she cried.

The nurse had dried her eyes and was staring at this strange exhibition, and Letitia had begun to perceive that she had got out of her own control, and could not recover the command of her words and looks. She had been so taken by surprise, so overwhelmed by the sudden shock that the commotion in her brain was like madness. It was all she could do not to shriek out, to fly at the spectators like a wild cat. How dared they look and see what she had not the strength to conceal?

"I will go," she said, "and call John; he will tell you what he thinks," with the impulse of a maddened woman to bring a man's strength into her quarrel and punish her adversary. What she thought John could do to Dr. Barker she did not know; and indeed she did not go to tell John. She returned to her room which she had left only a few minutes before, and from which she chased the frightened housemaids with a stamp on the floor which made them fly wildly, leaving brooms and dusters behind. The windows were all open, the sunshine bursting in in a great twinkling of light after yesterday's rain. She locked the door that she might be alone, and closed the windows one after another with a sound like thunder. To give expression to the rage that devoured her was something, a necessity, the only way of getting

out her passion. The fever gone, the fever gone! the fever which was her friend, which had worked for her, which had promised everything—everything that her heart desired. And they looked her in the face and told her it was gone! the fools and hypocrites, that vile woman crying in her falseness, the man triumphing over her, pretending to congratulate her when he must have known—— How could they help knowing? They must have known! They had done it on purpose to make her betray herself, to surprise her thoughts, to exult over her. And she had been so sure, so easy in her mind, so certain that everything was going well! Oh, oh!—her breath of rage could command no more expression than that common monosyllable. She could not appeal to God as people do in such wild shocks of passion. It was not God who could be appealed to. The other perhaps if she had known how—there are times when devil-worship might be a relief if it could be done.

“My God!” said Dr. Barker, who was not so restrained. “She is wild with disappointment and rage. Did she wish the boy to die?”

“Oh, doctor, she wished her own boy to be in his place,” said the nurse, who perhaps had a semi-maternal light upon the matter. The doctor kept on shaking his head as he finished his prescription.

“Don’t wake him for this or anything—not even for food; but give him the food as I told you.”

“I know, I know,” said the nurse, on whom the overstrain of her nerves was telling too. “Don’t you think I know, sir, how important it is?”

“Don’t you go off too—don’t leave him for a moment. Avoid all noise or discussion. Try and keep every one out, especially —” He did not finish his sentence, but it was unnecessary.

“All I can do, doctor—all I can do. But Mrs. Parke is the mistress of the house.”

“She will not come back again,” he said; “she will be in a terrible fright when she knows how she betrayed herself. Poor thing! as you say it was to put her boy in his place. They were wild before when this boy was born. Well, perhaps there is some excuse for them.”

“But you will come back to-night?”

“I should think so, indeed,” he said, “and before to-night And I shall see John Parke as I go.”

But by that strange influence which nobody can explain, before the doctor left the room the news had somehow flashed through the house. The fever gone! John Parke came out into the hall as Dr. Barker came downstairs. "Is it true?" he said. It would be vain to assert that there was not a dull throb which was not of pleasure or gratitude through John Parke's being when that rumour had come to him. The cup was dashed from his lips again, and this time for ever. He had to pause a moment in the library, where he was sitting, thinking involuntarily of the new life, to gulp down something—which shamed him to the bottom of his heart. But when he came out to meet the doctor that very shock had brought all his tenderer feelings back. "Is it true?" he said with a quiver of emotion in his voice. And at that moment Letty came flying in from the park and flung herself upon his neck, and kissed him like a whirlwind. "Oh, papa, Mar's better!" she said, her voice between a soft shout and song of joy ringing through the great house. There was no doubt, no hesitation in Letty's rapture and thankfulness. And it was with almost as true a heart, notwithstanding his momentary pang of feeling, that John grasped the doctor's hand and said, "Thank God!"

How the news ran through the house! It was known before it was ever spoken at all to the cook, who immediately rose from the retirement in which she was considering her *menu*, and ordered a delicate young chicken to be prepared to make soup. "I know what's wanted after a fever. Something hevery hour," said that dignitary. It swept up like a breeze to the housemaids upstairs busy with their work. "Oh, that's what's put the Missis in such a passion," they said with unerring logic. Tiny, released from her lessons by the same instinctive consciousness of something, danced a wild jig round the hall to the tune of "Mar's better, Mar's better!" all her hair floating about her, and her shoes coming off in her frenzy. And thus nature and human feeling held the day and reigned triumphant, notwithstanding the fierce tragedy, indescribable, terrible—a passion which rent the very soul, and to which no crime, no horror was impossible, which raged and exhausted itself in the silence, shut up with itself and all devilish impulses in the best room, in the bosom of the mistress of the house.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LETITIA was a long time in her room, and was not visible at all downstairs during the moment of gladness which changed the aspect of everything. Her door remained locked all the morning, and the housemaids were shut out, unable to "do" the room, which was the most curious interruption of all the laws of life. The bed was not made, nor anything swept nor dusted at noon, when she appeared downstairs—a thing which had never happened before in the house, which never happens in any respectable house except in cases of illness. Missis's room, too, the most important of all! Nobody saw what went on inside in those two long hours. Perhaps only John divined the strain which was going on in his wife's mind, and he but imperfectly, having little in his own nature of the poison in hers. And John took very good care not to disturb Letitia. He would neither go himself nor let Letty go to make sure that her mother knew the good news about Mar, or to see if she were ill or anything wrong. She was sure to know, he said; and no doubt she had something to do which kept her in her room. But there was also no doubt that he was somewhat nervous himself at her long disappearance. Two hours she was invisible, which for the mother of a family and the mistress of a house is a very long time. When she came downstairs she had her bonnet on and was going out. She had ordered the brougham though it was a very bright and warm day, and announced that she was going to Ridding for some shopping she had to do, but wanted no one to go with her—nor were they to wait luncheon for her should she be late.

"You have heard, of course, Letitia, about Mar," John said, as he came out with his old-fashioned politeness to put his wife into the carriage.

"Is there anything new about Mar?" she said, with a sort of disdain.

"Oh, mamma, he's better! the fever is gone; he is going to get well," cried Tiny, who was still dancing about the hall.

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Parke. "I heard that hours ago." And she drove away without a smile, without a word of satisfaction, or even pretended satisfaction, her face a blank as if it had been cut out of stone.

They watched the carriage turn the corner into the avenue with a chill at their hearts. "Was mamma angry?" Tiny asked. John Parke made no answer to his child's question, but went back to the library, and took up his paper with a heavy heart. He had felt it himself, more shame to him, more or less: a sort of horrible pang of disappointment: but she—it troubled him to divine how she must be feeling it. What awful sensations and sentiments were in her heart? It was not for herself, John said, trying to excuse her—it was for Duke and for him. If she only would understand that he did not mind, that he was glad, very glad, that his brother's son was getting better, that Mar was far too much like his own child to make his recovery anything but a happy circumstance! John's heart ached for that unmoving, fixed face. Oh, if she could be persuaded that neither Duke nor he would have been happy in the promotion that came through harm to Mar!

Letitia sank back in the corner of the brougham where nobody could see. She had been in almost a frenzy of rage and pain, walking about the room, throwing herself on the sofa and even on the floor in the abandonment of her fierce misery, hurting herself like a passionate child. No shame, no pride had restrained her. She had locked her door and closed her windows and given herself up to the paroxysm which would have been shameful if any one had seen it—yet which gave a certain horrible relief to the sensations that rent her to pieces. To have it all snatched from her hands again when she had made up her mind to it, when everything was so certain! To be proved a fool, a fool, again trusting in a chance which never would come! It seemed to Letitia that God was her enemy, and a malignant one, exulting at her disappointment, laughing at her pangs. She was too angry, too cruelly outraged to be content with thinking of chance or that it was her luck, as some people say. She wanted some one to hate for it—some one whose fault it was, whom she could revile and affront and defy to his face. The deception of circumstances, the disappointment of hopes, the cruel way in which she had been lulled into security only to be the more bitterly awakened from her illusion, made her mad. Not as Mary had been made mad, not with any confusion of mind, but with a horrible and intense subversion, a sense of being at war with everything, and living only to revenge herself upon God and man. She had revenged

herself upon herself first of all, beating her head against the wall, digging her nails into her flesh, because she had been such a fool, oh, such a fool! as to believe that what she wished was to be. And then there formed in her mind an awful thought, a movement of resistance, a refusal to be overthrown. She would not, she would not! allow herself to be played with, to be beaten, to be foiled, to have the cup snatched from her lips just when she was about to drink. No, she would not submit! Though God was the Master, yet there were ways of overcoming Him—yes, there were ways of overcoming. Though He said life, a human creature though so weak, if she had but courage enough, could say death, and He would not be able to prevent it. In the madness of her disappointment and rebellion there came into Letitia's mind a suggestion, an idea. It did not seem so much in order to have her own will, and her own advantage, as in order to get the better of God, who had shaped things the other way. He thought, perhaps, there was nothing she could do, that she would have to bear it. No, then! she would not! He should see—He was a tyrant. He had the power; but there were ways of baffling Him—there was a way—

Never in all Letitia's struggles had this thought come into her mind before. Mar had been helpless in her hands for years, but her arm had never armed itself against him. She had never sought to harm him. If she had exaggerated and cultivated his weakness it had been half, as she said, in a kind of scornful precaution, that nothing might happen to him in her house, and half from a grudge lest he should emulate her own sturdy boys, over whom he had so great and undeserved an advantage. She had never thought of harming him. After, when he was really ill, when Providence itself (for her mind could be pious when this influence which shapes events was on her side) had seemed to arrange for his removal, as she piously said, to a better world, it would have been more than nature had not her mind rushed forward to that evidently approaching conclusion which would make so great a difference. Oh, the difference it would make! enough to deaden the sense of pity, to sharpen every covetous desire. But still she had not thought of doing anything to secure the end she desired. No, no! all the other way—nothing had been neglected, nothing refused that would help him—nothing except her desire, her strong unspoken wish, had been against him.

And what had that to do with the issue one way or the other? A woman cannot pray to God that a boy may die. Thus the only unfair advantage which the intensity of her wish might have given her was taken away. On the other side they had this unfair advantage—they could pray, and pray as long as they pleased if that was any good. She had only her strong, persistent, never-suspended wish. Nothing, nothing had she done against him. She had never once thought of assisting or hastening fate.

But now that God had turned everything the wrong way and dashed the cup from her lips, and set Himself against her, now in the frenzy that filled her bosom, the rage, the shame, the rebellion, the wild and overwhelming passion, a new furious light had blazed in upon the boiling waves. Ah, God was great, they said. He could restore life when everything pointed to another conclusion. He could work a miracle—but a woman could foil Him. She could kill though He made alive. A moment of time, an insignificant action—and all His healing and restoration would come to nothing. Where did it come from—that awful suggestion? How did it arise? In what way was it shaped? From what source did it come—the horrible thought? It came cutting through her mind and all her agitation in a moment as if it had been flung into her soul from outside. It came like a flash of lightning, like an arrow, like a pointed dart that cut into the flesh. It was not there one moment, and the next it was there, dominating all the commotion, penetrating all the fever and the tumult—a master thought.

She drove along the country roads in the corner of her carriage, seeing nothing—through the noonday sunshine and the shade of the trees, through villages and by cornfields where the storing of the harvest had begun—and heard nothing and noticed nothing. At last she pulled the string strongly and told the coachman not to go to Ridding, but in the other direction to another little town, to a certain house where she had a call to make. And she made the call; and came out of the house while the coachman was walking his horses up and down, and went into the chief street of the place and made a few purchases, then returned to the house of her friend and got into the brougham and drove home. The coachman had not been aware that she had done anything but come out of the house where she had been calling when he drew up. And he drove home very quickly, having himself come out

before his dinner-hour, a thing that did not please him. Letitia was very pale when she came home and tired with her long drive, but she ate her luncheon and did not again shut herself from her family—nor did she avoid speaking of Mar. She went to look at him after she had rested a little.

“But I see very little difference,” she said. “He seems to me just as ill as ever, too weak to move, and scarcely opening his eyes.”

“But the fever is gone,” they all cried together.

Letitia shook her head. “I hope the doctor was not mistaken,” she said.

Her words threw a cold chill upon the household after the delight of the morning. But that was all. “Missis was always one to take the worst view of everything,” the cook remarked, to whom the undeniable proof of improvement which Mar had shown by swallowing his chicken broth was a proof that needed no confirmation. She sent up a little of the same broth to Mrs. Parke, hearing that she had a headache, and received a message back to the effect that the soup was very good, and that it must be kept always going, always ready, as the young gentleman was able to take it. “But I’ll try him with a bit of chicken to-morrow, no more slops,” said the cook. Thus, though she shook her head and owned that she was not herself so hopeful as Dr. Barker, Letitia sanctioned more or less the satisfaction of the household, and spent the afternoon in a legitimate way. She was frightfully pale, and complained of a headache, which she partly attributed to fatigue and partly to the sun. Yet she saw one or two people who called, and explained Mar’s condition to them. “Presumably so much better,” she said, “but I fear, I fear the doctor takes too sanguine a view. A week hence, if all is well—— But,” she said, “the strain of suspense is terrible, almost worse than anything that is certain.” There were people who saw her that day who declared afterwards that they could not understand why it was said of Mrs. Parke that she had no heart. Why, if ever there was a woman who felt deeply, it was Mrs. Parke. The suspense about her poor nephew and his long illness had worn her to a shadow; it had nearly killed her—especially as, poor thing, she was not one who took a cheerful view.

Letitia paid several visits in the evening to the sick room, or to

the ante-room connected with it, after the night nurse had begun her duty. The other attendant was not in sympathy with the mistress of the house ; but she stood with the night nurse at the door of the room and peered at Mar, and they mutually shook their heads and gave each other meaning looks.

"I wish I could see him with Nurse Robinson's eyes," the attendant said, and Mrs. Parke replied with a sigh that she hoped most earnestly the doctor was not mistaken. "For I see no difference, nurse."

"And neither do I, ma'am," said the gloomy woman. She paused for a moment, and then she added in a whisper, "I've no business to interfere, but I can't bear to see you looking so pale. I do wish, Mrs. Parke, that you would go to bed."

"I thought the same of you, nurse," said Mrs. Parke ; "indeed I wanted to offer to sit up half the night to let you have a little rest."

"Thank you very much, but I must keep to my post," the woman said.

"Then you must let me give you some of my cordial," said Mrs. Parke. "I have an old mixture that has been in the family for a long time. You must take a little of it from my hand ; it will strengthen you."

There was a little argument over this, all whispered at the door of Mar's room, and at last the nurse consented. She was so touched that when Letitia came back carrying the drink, she ventured to give Mrs. Parke a timid kiss, and to say, "Dear lady, I wish you would go to bed yourself and get a good rest. It is almost more trying when one begins to hope, and you are frightfully pale."

Letitia took the kiss in very good part (for the nurse was a lady), and promised to go and rest. It was still early, the household not yet settled to the quiet of the night, and John had not come upstairs ; so that there was nobody to note Letitia's movements, who went and came through the half-lit corridor in a dark dressing-gown, and with a noiseless foot, stealing from her own room to that of the patient. She had made this little pilgrimage several times, when, listening in the ante-room, she heard at last the heavy, regular breathing of the attendant in Mar's room, which proved to her that what she intended had come to pass. Letitia paused for a moment outside the

door. She was a little, light woman, still slim, even thin, as in her younger days. She moved like a ghost, making no sound; but when she perceived that all was ready for her purpose, there was something that almost betrayed her, and that was the labouring, gasping breath of excitement, which it was all she could do to keep down. Her lungs, her heart, were so strained by the effort to be calm, that her hurried respiration came like the breath of a furnace, hot and interrupted. She stood holding on to the framework of the door, looking in from the comparative light of the room in which she stood to the shaded room in which Mar lay, with the light falling upon the table by his bedside, where were his drinks and medicines—and faintly upon the white pillow with the dark head sunk upon it, in a ghostly stillness. The nurse sat in an easy-chair behind, out of the light, with her head fallen back, wrapped in sleep, breathing regularly and deep. Letitia stood and watched for a whole long minute, which might have been a year, peering with her white and ghastly face, like a visible spirit of evil. When she had a little subdued the panting of her heart she pushed the door noiselessly, and stole into the room. She kept her eyes upon the sleeping nurse, ready to draw back if she should move; but that was the only interruption Letitia feared. She had left the door open for her own safe retreat. It had not occurred to her that any one could follow behind her. She went over to the bedside to the table on which the light fell. And then she stood still again for another terrible moment. Did her heart fail her, did any hand of grace hold her back? She might have done what she had to do three times over while she stood there with one hand upon her breast keeping down her panting breath. Then she put her right hand for a moment over the glass with the milk that stood ready, the drink for the sick boy. That was all. It was the affair of a moment. She might have done it in the nurses' presence, and no one would have been the wiser. When she had done it she made a step backward, meaning to pass away as she had come. But instead of moving freely through the open air she came suddenly against something, some one, who stood behind, and who grasped without a word her clenched right hand. Letitia's labouring heart leaped as if it would have burst out of her breast. There came from her a choked and horrible sound, not a cry, for she durst not cry. She kept her

senses, her consciousness by a terrible effort. No! whoever it was, if it was John, her husband, if it was one of her children who had discovered her in this awful moment—whatever it was, she would not fall down there at Mar's bedside like a murderer caught in the act. No! out of the room, at least, out of the scene—somewhere, where they might kill her if they pleased, but not there—not there!

He or she who had seized her from behind stretched a hand over her shoulder and took the milk from the table, and then the two figures in a strange, noiseless mingling, half struggle, half accord, passed from the darkened room into the light, and looked in a horror, beyond words, into each other's faces. And then all the forces of self-control could no longer restrain the affrighted heart-stricken cry, "Mary!" which came from Letitia's dry lips.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IN the moment of that movement, half dragged by the fast and firm hold upon her, half pushing her captor, and notwithstanding the horror and panic of her arrest and discovery, Letitia had time to form in her mind the explanations she would give to John, if it were John; or if it should happen to be Letty (which was impossible—but all things are possible to guilt and mortal terror), the indignant superiority with which she would send her away. But when she twisted herself round and confronted in the light of the ante-room, which seemed a brilliant illumination after the dark chamber within, the face of Mary! Mary! Letitia's strength collapsed, her self-command abandoned her, the gasping breath came in a hoarse rattle from her throat, her jaw fell, her eyes seemed to turn upon their orbits. She hung by the hand that held her half insensible, helpless, overwhelmed, like a bundle of clothes, as if she had no longer any sensation or impulse of her own. The only thing that kept her from falling was the grip upon her hand and the support of the arm which Mary had put round her to reach it. She was stunned and stupefied, scarcely alive enough to be afraid, though there began to grow upon her mind by degrees a consciousness that this woman who held her had been mad—which even when she had full command of herself was what Letitia feared most in all the world. Mary was taller than her prisoner. She seemed taller

now than ever she had done in her life ; her eyes were shining like stars, her nostrils dilated with excitement and strong feeling, her colour coming and going. She did not speak, but with her other hand held the milk to Letitia's lips, always with her arm supporting her, as one might offer drink to a child. "Drink it," she said at last, "drink it!" in a keen whisper that seemed to cut the silence like a knife. No mercy, no pity were in Mary's eyes. She held Letitia's wrist in a grip of iron, and pressing upon her, forcing her head back, held the glass to her lips, "drink it!—drink it!" The struggle was but a momentary one, and noiseless. They were like two shadows moving, swaying, forming but one in their speechless conflict. Then came the sudden crash of the shattered glass, as Letitia, recovering her forces in her desperation, with a sudden twist of her arm dashed it from her antagonist's hand. The contents were spilled between them, and formed a white pool upon the floor, from which, instinctively, each woman drew back : and there they stood gazing at each other again.

Letitia's every nerve was trembling with terror, physical fear surmounting the first panic of discovery, which was a terror of the mind. She expected every moment an *accès* of madness, in which she might be torn limb from limb—though at the same time calculating that the mad woman might loose her hold, and there might be a possibility of desperate flight, and of all the household on her side protecting her, and sudden relief from every terror. The nature of the emergency brought back to her, after the first speechless horror, her power of thought and calculation. She kept her eyes upon Mary's eyes, still wild with fright, but awakened to a vigilant watch and keen attention to every indication of the other's looks. But this was not the Mary whom Letitia had ever seen before. Her face had cleared like a sky after rain. It was like that sky ethereally pale, exalted, with a transparency that seemed to come from some light beyond. Mary was no longer a weak woman distracted by over tenderness, by visionary compunctions, humbleness, uncertainty—but clear and strong, with the quivering, expanding nostrils, the wide-open eyes and trembling lips of inspiration. She held her captive still, though she stood a little apart from her, grasping fast in her own Letitia's shut hand.

"What did you put in it," she said, "to kill my boy?"

"Mary!" Letitia panted. "Why do you try to frighten me?—your boy?—you have told me you had no boy—"

"That you tried to kill—before he was born—that you drove out of my knowledge—for I was mad. I know it all now—and you did it: what did you put in that to kill my boy?"

There came a shriek from Letitia's labouring breast. The words maddened her again into frantic terror. She made a wild effort to free her hand. Though it was a shriek, and intense as the loudest outcry, it was subdued by the other terror of being heard and discovered. Between the two she hung suspended, not able altogether to coerce nature, but still keeping its expression under.

"Mary," she cried, "let me go—let me go!"

"What was it you put in it to kill him?"

"Mary! Let me go—let me go!"

"Not till you tell me: and then you shall go—where you will: away from here—away from my boy."

They were women not used to any such struggle, and feeling in the depths of their hearts that to struggle so for any reason was a shame to them; and every moment as it passed brought this consciousness more near to Mary, who in the first shock was capable of anything. Perhaps her hold loosened, perhaps Letitia felt the magnetic effect of that relaxation even before it was palpable. All at once she flung out her arm which Mary held, and threw something which was in it into the dull small fire which smouldered in the grate, and which was kept there, notwithstanding the warmth of the July nights, for the uses of the sick room. There was a faint clang of glass against the bars, and then the two figures separated altogether and stood apart, still gazing at each other with panting breath.

Letitia had felt that if she ever got free from the grasp that held her—if ever she could throw off the hand that was like velvet yet closed on her like iron, there was but one thing to do, to fly, to get help, to make everybody understand that Lady Frogmore, mad as she had once been before, had burst in on her and tried to kill her. But now that she had freed herself she did not take to flight as she intended. She drew away a step nearer the door, that she might retain that alternative—and kept the most watchful eye upon her antagonist, ready in a moment to fly. But she did not do so. Her breath began to come more easily.

Perhaps she was relieved that the attempt had failed—which at once relaxed the tragic tension of her nerves ; at all events her heart gave a leap of satisfaction that there was no proof against her. The milk spilt on the floor had soaked into the carpet ; the vial was fused into liquid metal, which could betray no one, in the fire. She had gone through a terrible moment, but it was over. She fell back upon the wall and supported herself against it, propping up the shoulders which still heaved with the storm that was past—and then she said in something like her usual voice :

“What is this all about, Lady Frogmore ?”

Mary had grown restless like Letitia. The first impulse of passion and excitement failed in her, it was so unusual to her gentle bosom. She looked at this woman who stood defiant, staring at her with a look of wonder and doubt. “If I have done you any wrong—” she began with a quaver in her voice, and then paused. “You know,” she began again, “that I have not done you wrong. You stole into the room in the dark ; you put something in his drink. Oh,” cried Mary, clasping her hands, “if I had not come at that moment, if God had not sent me, my boy might have been murdered. How dare you stand and face me there ? Go, go !” She stamped her foot upon the floor. “Go ! Don’t come near my child again.”

“Your child,” Letitia said, with a smile of scorn. “You who never had one ! You have said so a hundred times.”

Mary’s lips opened as if to reply—then she paused. “Who am I to be angry ?” she said. “I have given her cause to speak. Oh, go,” she cried, “go. I will not accuse you. You know what you have done, and I know, and that will separate us for ever and ever. No one, no one shall come near my child to harm him again, for his mother will be there. Go, you wicked woman, go.”

“You are mad,” cried Letitia ; “who would believe a mad woman ? Say what you please. Do you think any one will listen to you ? You are mad, mad ! I’ll have you put in an asylum. I’ll have you shut up. I’ll— Oh, save me from her, she’s mad, she’s mad !” cried Letitia, with a shriek. There was some one coming—and Mary had put forth her hands as if to seize her again. Letitia ran past her to the door, and there stood for a moment panting, vindictive. “Do you think they will leave him with a mad woman ?” she cried, then gave another shriek and

fled ; for it was not John, as she thought, who was coming to protect her, but another cloaked figure like a repetition of Mary's, who appeared on the other side. She did not stop for further parley, but ran wildly, with the precipitation of terror, into the long, silent, dim corridor.

"What has happened? What is it?" said Agnes terrified, going up to her sister, who stood with clasped hands in the middle of the room, the light falling upon her face. Mary put her arms round her, giving her a close momentary embrace, which was half joy to see some one come who would stand by her, and half an instinctive motion to support herself and derive strength from her sister's touch.

"I came in time," she said. "I saved him. He is safe. I will never leave my child again. Oh, never while she is here——"

"What is it? What is it, Mary?"

Mary told her story, leaning upon her sister, holding her fast, whispering in her ear. Even Letitia's cries and vituperations had been subdued, whispers of passion and desperation, no more. But to Agnes it seemed an incredible tale, a vision of the still confused and wandering brain. She soothed Mary, patting her shoulder with a trembling hand, saying, "No, no. You must have dreamt it. No, no, my dear: oh, that was not the danger," in a troubled voice. Mary detached herself from her sister, putting Agnes away gently, but with decision. She took off the bonnet which she had worn all this time, and tied the veil which had dropped from it over her head. Then she went into the inner room without a word. To pass into that silent and darkened room out of the agitation of the other was like going into another world. The breathing of the nurse in her deep sleep filled it with a faint regular sound. The patient did not stir. Mary sat down at the foot of the bed, like a shadow. Her figure in its dark dress seemed to be absorbed in the dimness and pass out of sight altogether. Agnes stood at the door and looked into the chamber full of sleep and silence, weighed down by the mystery about her. Had that fantastic, horrible scene really happened, or had it been but a dream? There were still traces on the carpet of something white that had soaked into it, and her foot had crushed a portion of the broken glass upon the floor. Was it true? Was it possible it could be true? She stood wondering on the verge of the stillness that closed over the sick room

in which her sister had disappeared and been swallowed up. It is strange at any time to look into a chamber thus occupied. The feeble patient in the bed noiseless in the slumber of weakness, the watcher by his side invisible in the gloom, a point of wakeful, anxious life among those shadows. The nurse sleeping heavily in the background, invisible, added another aching circumstance to the mystery—nurses of that class do not sleep so. Was it true? Could it be true?

She was called back to the common passage of affairs by a faint knock at the door of the ante-room, and going to it found Ford, conducted by a sleepy maid who had been roused to prepare Lady Frogmore's room. "Where is my lady, Miss Hill?" said the anxious Ford. "I can't find my lady. It's late and she's tired and I must get her to bed."

"No, Ford; she will not leave her son to-night."

"Oh, Miss Hill, her son! she will die of it: or she will go wrong again, and what will everybody say to me for allowing this? She must come to bed. She must come to bed!"

"No one can make her do so, Ford—the nurse has gone to sleep; some one is wanted here. I will stay by her, and if I can get her to go to bed I will."

"You will both kill yourselves," cried Ford, aggrieved, "and what will be the advantage in that? You may, if you please, Miss Hill, I have no authority; but my lady, my lady! It is as much as her life is worth."

Agnes bade the maid bring her some shawls and lie down herself. She went softly into the sick room and put a wrap round Mary's shoulders, who raised her pale face, just visible through the dark in its whiteness, to kiss her in token of thanks. Agnes permitted her hungry heart an anxious look at the patient, and satisfied herself, to the relief of various awful doubts that had been growing on her, that he breathed softly and regularly, though almost inaudibly. She endeavoured in vain to rouse the sleeping woman behind, and then she herself retired into the ante-room. Was it true? Could it be possible? As she sat there, realizing the extraordinary way in which Mary and she had been allowed to come in and take possession, when she perceived that no one came near them, that Letitia did not return, did not even send a servant, but gave up the patient and the charge of him without a word, without the slightest notice of their possible

wants, or care for them, a sense of the strangeness of it all grew upon her. Could Mary's tale be true? Oh, God! could it be true? The woman sleeping so deeply, not to be roused—the house fallen into complete silence as if every one had gone to bed; Mary and she, as it seemed, the only two waking in all the place. Could it be true? Could it be true?

An hour or two later the scene had changed, the sick room was faintly illuminated through the closed curtains with the light of the morning. And Agnes, looking in through the half-open doorway, met Mary's look, her face like the clear, pale morning, a sort of ecstasy in her wakeful eyes. She did not seem to have moved since Agnes threw the shawl round her, nor had she closed those widely-opened eyes. When she had given her sister that look they returned to the bed where Mar's young wasted countenance was now dimly visible. There was almost a chill in that blue dawning of the new day; a something clear and keen, above illusion, the light of reality, yet the light of a vision. As Agnes looked everything returned to its immovable stillness again. The pale boy sleeping, the pale mother watching, the nurse behind come into sight with her head thrown back, a potent witness in her insensibility. Was it true? Could it be true?

(To be concluded.)

"Dr. My-Book."

'THE stomach is the kitchen. If things are wrong in the kitchen they won't be right in the garret. I tell people this all day long: tell them to read what I have written on the subject. They laugh at me, and call me 'Dr. My-Book.'

Such words as these might serve as a text in estimating the character of John Abernethy, as many a time they evidently gave some doleful-visaged patient an insight into the eminent surgeon's dogmatic method of treatment.

The words seem to us, though, somewhat excusatory as well as dogmatic. There is a suspicion of the air-plaintive in their sound; a savour of annoyance on the part of the speaker in using them. The man, who by nature was himself a confirmed humorist, would, doubtless, chafe at the world's estimation when expressed in the form of joke at his own expense.

But let us turn for a moment from "Dr. My-Book" to plain John Abernethy, before he courted literary criticism and earned his popular nickname.

Well known as his name may be, he would not seem to have enjoyed anything like an European reputation. Still, among "people of importance in their day," few have departed leaving behind them "footprints in the sands of time" more deeply imprinted. Nor can his labours, truly humanitarian in every sense of the word, lessen the estimation in which he deserves to be held.

The record of his nativity, though brief, seems to have permitted of discussion; for so lately as May, 1873, his son writes to *Notes and Queries*: "My father was born in London, April 3rd, 1764." In these days of exenterate biography a detail so meagre seems strange. But, allowing for the comparative remoteness of the event and taking into consideration that two lines only were all poor Abernethy got in the *Lancet* in the way of obituary, it is perhaps as much as one has a right to expect.

His father was a London merchant ; his grandfather is humorously described as an " Irish minister of heterodox views and possessing a strong leaning towards medicine ;" which suggests the curious inference that Abernethy's love of science and his well-known dogmatism in its practice were the effects of heredity. The old divine, doubtless a specimen of the Church-Militant, was probably quite as obstinate as the grandson.

Scarcely less brief than the story of his birth is that of his school-days. Wolverhampton Grammar School was chosen as the nursery wherein he was to vegetate ; for we find him, according to most accounts, anything but a remarkable scholar. In this, however, he ranks with Newton, Sheridan and many others who, though said to have been dull youths, managed to make a stir in the world in after life. The juvenile Abernethy may, perhaps, have heard traditions such as these : he did not hesitate to " crib " in his Greek lessons when opportunity offered, and in consequence was on one occasion " struck to the ground by the master "—by way of reproof, probably. The fact that he never afterwards took to Greek may perhaps be traced to this circumstance.

After completing his preliminary education at Wolverhampton he was apprenticed, at the age of sixteen, to Sir Charles Blicke, one of the surgeons at St. Bartholomew's Hospital—whose skill, by the way, he did not hold in any great estimation. Here he enjoyed the advantage of attending the lectures of John Hunter, then the most eminent surgeon in the kingdom, and by this means laid the foundation of his own future brilliant career. At the age of twenty-two he was appointed assistant surgeon, and began a private practice in a house in St. Mildred's Court, Poultry, under the shadow of the Church of St. Mildred, long since removed for "improvements."

For a description of Abernethy's appearance we are indebted to the picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence, painted in 1820, which now adorns St. Bartholomew's. This depicts him as a man of the middle size and well made, and shows a face, clean-shaven and slightly florid in complexion, not unlike that of Sir Walter Scott ; his eyes, of a light-blue colour, are humorous as well as reflective ; his forehead high and surmounted by well-powdered hair, worn in a pig-tail *queue* behind. The whole expression

of the face is mild and benign. He is dressed in the swallow-tail coat, with high collar and large stock of the period.

Many years elapsed ere he succeeded to the head-surgeonship of St. Bartholomew's, then held by Sir James Earle. In the meantime, however, whilst with a considerable indifference to money, he was making a large income. Still, he had to work hard for it. He had as yet no emolument from the hospital ; he was still only an assistant surgeon. The tenacity of office of which assistant surgeons so commonly complain, they have themselves seldom failed to exercise when circumstances permitted—Abernethy excepted. The long tenure of office by his senior wearied him, and was once the source of not very agreeable discussion between them. It appears that Abernethy understood Sir James on one occasion to speak of his early resignation. The latter about this time called on his assistant, and was reminded of his promise. Sir James, however, having a different impression of the facts, denied ever having given such a pledge. The affirmative and negative were more than once exchanged, and not in the most courteous manner. When Sir James was about to leave Abernethy opened the door for him, and said at parting, "Well, Sir James, it comes to this : you say you did not promise to resign ; I say you did, and now all I have to add is—Damn the liar ! "

Still, while waiting for the post he coveted, he was steadily building up a reputation by means of his splendid lectures at the hospital. He was the first to enunciate and establish the great principle—completely revolutionizing the whole field of surgery—that local diseases were symptoms of a disordered constitution and not independent maladies. He was remarkably free from technicality and unusually rich in illustration—indeed he possessed attributes of the orator combined with dramatic power of such high order that he threw a charm over the pursuits of the surgeon and anatomist which they had not hitherto possessed.

The modest dwelling in the City was exchanged in 1799—the year before he married—for a house in Bedford Row, W.C. Here he resided until close upon his death, and here, apparently, must we look for the scene of most of those amusing encounters between doctor and patient, which display the humour as well as the eccentricity of "Dr. My-Book."

But before touching on any of these it is necessary, for the

sake of sequence, to refer to the publication of "My Book"—the first popular work on health in our language, according to the *Athenæum*. This took place in 1804, when his practice had developed to such a degree that he was quite unable to do full justice to it. He, therefore, attempted to shorten the labours of consultation by referring his patients to this literary achievement—especially to page 72, which, in its author's estimation, was adapted to everybody's case. This, of course, was made the subject of a great deal of quizzing, and earned him his nickname.

But as his reputation grew, so in proportion was he made to suffer the hostility ever shown to those who fill high places. He became an object for the most violent attacks of his rivals, and their name seems to have been legion. Headed by his arch-enemy the *Lancet*, which spoke of his lectures as "betraying an extreme paucity of chirurgical knowledge," they one and all fell on him tooth and nail, denied his skill, scoffed at his arguments in the lecture-room, and ferociously attacked his written works. His natural oddness and eccentricity they declared to be rudeness and brutality, and suggested that he encouraged his ill-manner for the sake of notoriety. In short they tried to make the name of Abernethy a byword for vulgarity and ignorance. But the object of all this animus was as tender and generous as a man ought to be, and as a man of great intelligence usually is. He was eccentric, but his eccentricity always took the direction of common sense. As to the charge of want of courtesy preferred against him, it was an exaggeration invented by his rivals. His time was precious, and he rightly considered that his business was to set his patients in the way of recovering their lost health—not to listen to their fatuous prosings about their maladies. He was, therefore, prompt and decided in checking the egotistical garrulity of valetudinarians. This candid expression of his dislike to unnecessary talk had one good result. People who came to consult him took care not to offend him by bootless prating. A lady on one occasion entered his consulting-room and put before him an injured finger, without saying a word. In silence Abernethy dressed the wound, when instantly and silently the lady put the usual fee on the table and retired. In a few days she called again and offered the finger for inspection. "Better?" asked the surgeon. "Better," answered the lady. Not another word followed. Three or four similar visits were made, at the

last of which the patient held out her finger perfectly healed. "Well?" asked Abernethy. "Well," was the reply. "Upon my soul, madam!" exclaimed the delighted surgeon, "you are the most rational woman I ever met with."

Nothing could have pleased him more; he preferred work to words, and wanted his patients to understand to which he gave the preference. He may be said to be the Carlyle of medicine—equally a hater of cant and shams. He did not want to foster any mysterious reverence among the laity. Indeed his mind disqualified him from adopting that affected interest which distinguishes many of the well-bred physicians. The doctor who, to a lady who told him that whenever she lifted up her arm it pained her, said, "Then what a fool you must be to do it," must have been one who heartily despised the little arts of the fashionable practitioner. So too did he show more point than courtesy when, in reply to a patient who complained of his stomach being out of order, he said, "Ay, I perceive that by your nose."

Abernethy was invariably successful in making use of apt illustration in order to convince an obstinate client, when less plain advice was not heeded. One of his patients had recovered from a serious illness, but was threatened by the influence of the same causes with a return of his malady. "He thought," said Abernethy, "that if he did not drink like a fish, he might eat like a glutton." He lived in the country and Abernethy went one day and dined with him. "Well," writes "Dr. My-Book," "I saw he was at his old tricks again; so being a merchant, I asked him what he would think of a man who, having thriven in business and amassed a fortune, went and risked it all in some imprudent speculation?" "Why," said the merchant, "I should think him a great ass." "Nay, then, sir," said Abernethy, "thou art the man!"

That Abernethy's characteristic independence did not by any means damage his reputation is shown in a variety of ways, but more particularly in his relations with royalty. He was attending a poor man whose case required assistance at a given time of the day. One morning when he was to see this patient the Duke of York called to say that the Prince of Wales wished to see him immediately. "That I cannot do," said Abernethy, "as I have an appointment at twelve o'clock." "But," said His Royal Highness, "you will not refuse the Prince; if so I must proceed

to——." "Ah!" was the reply, "he will suit the Prince better than I should." Yet he was again sent for a few hours later, and of course went.

This is only one of the cases in which he showed the utmost kindness to those whom charity had confided to his care—as well as independence. One day when leaving home for the hospital, to a person who was desirous of detaining him, he said, "Private patients, if they do not like me, can go elsewhere; but the poor devils in the hospital I am bound to take care of."

In 1814 Abernethy was appointed lecturer to the College of Surgeons. "Now," said he, "I shall be able to teach those old fellows how to make a poultice!" Whether he actually descended to that learned assembly on the proper composition of the cataplasm is doubtful; but his prelections at the college were quickly characterized by a clearness of description and vividness of illustration, which it may safely be inferred "those old fellows" generally profited by. In the following year he succeeded Sir James Earle at St. Bartholomew's, after twenty-eight years of assistant-surgeonship.

Apart from his devotion to medicine his lectures were a constant source of interest to him. He looked upon the students as his children, gave them collectively the best of instruction and even rendered monetary aid in individual cases where he saw it was needed. This fatherly feeling he very drolly exemplified on one occasion, when, seeing an unusual concourse in the theatre of the hospital, he commenced his lecture by groaning out, "God help you! what is to become of you all?" As another instance of his devotion to his work, Macilwain, his biographer, tells us—"I met him coming into the hospital one day, and seeing him rather smartly dressed, with a white waistcoat, I said, 'You are very gay to-day, sir.' 'Ay,' said he; 'one of the girls was married this morning.' 'Indeed, sir,' I said. 'You should have given yourself a holiday on such an occasion and not come to lecture.' 'Nay,' returned he; 'egad! I came down to lecture the day I was married myself!'"

He had married in 1800 an estimable lady whom he was in the habit of introducing to his friends as "a lady who has boxed my ears many a time." Mrs. Abernethy survived him twenty-four years, the whole period of their marriage having been a very happy one.

We do not know if it is peculiar to anatomical lecturers not to

allow their weddings to interfere with their lectures, but Sir Astley Cooper, Abernethy's contemporary, was married early one morning, in order to enable him to give his usual lecture on that day. He was the most famous as well as the most fashionable doctor of his time, was surgeon to George IV. and made from fifteen to twenty thousand a year.

At the height of Sir Astley Cooper's fame Abernethy was offered a baronetcy and might have secured a court appointment as well but for refusing to attend the king until he had delivered his usual lecture at the hospital. He seems to have been indifferent to all honours outside of his profession, although his excuse for declining the title was that his means were not sufficient to support the proper weight and dignity attaching to it. He was, however, unable to forbear making a joke of the matter, for his first announcement of the offer to his family was at table, when he jocosely asked his wife, "Lady Abernethy, will you allow me to offer you the toast?"

The publication of "My Book" had been an era in the author's life. Many who have heard of it know little of its contents. That it contained directions for regulating the diet, and that page 72 was supposed to be applicable to everybody's case, is the general impression. There is no doubt, however, that it was a very valuable work and fixed attention on a point, certainly not unknown before, but too generally overlooked. This was in reference to the constitutional origin of local disease. The writer gave this subject a more philosophical treatment than it had hitherto received, and imported into his work not only the views but much of the spirit that made John Hunter the presiding genius of his day. The general object of "My Book" was to set forth the great fact of the reciprocal influence existing between the nervous system and the digestive organs and the power they mutually exert in the causation and cure of diseases; and this, whether the diseases originate in disturbance *primarily* directed to the brain or to the digestive organs, whether the result of accident, such as mechanical injury, or other local manifestations more commonly termed disease. That it succeeded in fulfilling the aims of the author in his own day there can be no doubt, for the book had an extensive circulation among all classes and excited a great deal of attention from the public as well as the profession.

The celebrity which Abernethy attained—seldom enjoyed by *living* men of mark—was due not only to his great professional skill but also in part to the singularity of his manners. That he was plain spoken and fond of using our pure Saxon there can be no doubt, but under this practice lay a kindly heart. It is told of a certain lieutenant in the army, who in 1818 fell from his horse and fractured his skull, that when Abernethy was once called in he came and attended daily at the invalid's lodgings. On recovery, his grateful patient inquired the surgeon's fee. Abernethy smiled and asked, "Who is that young woman?" "She is my wife," replied the other. "What is your rank?" was the next question. "Half-pay lieutenant," said the invalid. "Very well," concluded Abernethy, "wait till you're a general; then we'll talk about it."

But a more vigorous example of the same kind is embodied in an anecdote told of him on being called upon by a gentleman who had given him a fee of twenty pounds to re-attend his wife. "Are you the d——d fool that gave me twenty pounds the other day?" he asked. "Go home and tell your wife to dine earlier, eat less—and do you keep your money in your pocket, for the advice of no doctor is worth twenty pounds." It is amusing, particularly for the sake of variety, to come across an instance in which Abernethy met his match in repartee. This occurred in the person of an audacious medical student.

"What would you do," bluntly inquired the surgeon, "if a man was brought to you with a broken leg?"

"Set it, sir."

"Good—very good. You're a very pleasant, witty young man. And, doubtless, you can tell me what muscles of the body I should set in motion if I kicked you, as you deserve to be kicked, for your impertinence."

"You would set in motion," responded the youth, with perfect coolness, "the flexors and extensors of my left arm; for I should immediately knock you down."

This retort must have considerably astonished the bellicose scientist, and, perhaps, he carried it in his mind when receiving another student, an Oxford man.

"Well! what the devil do you want?" he demanded.

"Physic."

"What's the matter with you?"

"Can't tell: read too much, I think."

"Where do you come from?"

"Oxford."

"Ah! drink too much, you mean. Never knew an Oxford or Cambridge man die from over application to anything but his stomach! What the devil did you come to me for?"

He does not appear to have been more civil to so august a personage as the "Iron Duke," who, having insisted on seeing him out of his usual hours, abruptly entered his parlour one day.

"How did you get into the room?" inquired Abernethy with a scowl.

"By the door," replied the duke.

"Then," said "Dr. My-Book," "I recommend you to make your exit the same way."

Another story of his brusqueness is worth repeating, especially as in this case he exhibited a good example of the power of quick repartee which was one of his leading characteristics. A person of rank had been received, as he imagined, with great rudeness. He threatened to make Abernethy eat his words. "That would be no use," said the latter. "They will be sure to come up again."

A notice of the life of Abernethy—sketchy as it must be for want of complete data—would be imperfect without a few words concerning the biscuit with which his name has so long been associated. Wellington is not more identified in the popular mind with boots and Brougham with carriages than Abernethy with biscuits. Professor Freeman, in his "History of the Norman Conquest," has already deprived us of the King Alfred and the burnt cakes story, and it seems we are also to be robbed of the biscuit tradition :

"And fondly mourn the dear delusion gone."

However wholesome they may be, the hard biscuits known as "Abernethies" have nothing to do with the subject of this memoir. They were made by a namesake—a baker near Adelaide Street, whose shop has long since disappeared with the extensive alterations that took place in the Strand in the reign of William IV. and about the period of Abernethy's death. The eminent surgeon, possibly attracted by the name over this shop, was known to eat these biscuits, which seems to have induced the public to purchase them under the impression that he was the

inventor. Patients, hoping to propitiate the great man, would tell him that they "took his biscuits at breakfast," which invariably called forth the exclamation, "*My* biscuits! I've nothing to do with them; they are called after the baker who introduced them and whose name was Abernethy."

Our estimate of "Dr. My-Book" can only be based on characteristic anecdotes, his written works, and the reforms in surgical science which he propounded and instituted. These provide but inconsecutive chapters—a biographical patchwork from which one can select but do little else. By means of the narrative matter we have tried to depict certain qualities peculiar to the man: his published works permit us to speak with more assurance concerning the doctor.

When we reflect that diseases consist entirely of altered conditions in the structure or function of some part of the body, a formal announcement that they must generally be influenced by the organs on which the whole body depends for its nutrition seems to have so much the aspect of an obvious truism that we scarcely know whether most to wonder at so formal an announcement of it having been necessary, or the astonishing number and variety of the reservations with which it has been admitted. But, strange as it may appear, and although all the facts have stared mankind in the face for ages—even though their relations have been more or less felt and acknowledged in cases usually submitted to the physician—we venture to say that nothing like an attention at all adequate to their importance was obtained for them in the practice of medicine, and scarcely at all in surgery, until the time of Abernethy. The organs of nutrition were his chief study, and the great theory of his life to regard the stomach as the seat of almost all maladies. "The stomach is everything," he used to say; "we use it ill when we are young and it uses us ill when we are old"—and to the stomach accordingly he gave undivided attention. He held, in common with his master, the famous John Hunter, that operations were a reflection on the healing art, and that the *habitual* operator was as a savage in arms who performs by violence what a civilized person would accomplish by stratagem. When we remember the wholesale amputation which in his day medical men indulged in, we cannot revere too highly the one whose humanity and intelligence prompted him to the utmost to reform the abuse. Two of his

professional axioms substantiate his anxiety to secure this end. They were :—" Prevent the operation from becoming necessary, and cure the sick man without having recourse to the lance," and, " Never perform an operation on another person which, under similar circumstances, you would not have performed on yourself"—advice which, given at a time anterior to the introduction of anæsthetics, was doubly noteworthy. Such wise and kindly feelings as these he himself carried into practice, for it is told of him that he would cover up the instruments when about to perform on a patient in the hospital, saying, " It is hard enough for the poor thing to undergo the pain without being obliged to see the preparations for it."

Perhaps surgery is more indebted to John Abernethy for being raised from the position of a rather mechanical art to the rank of a science than even to John Hunter himself. It is frequently the fate of reformers to be forgotten with the evils they reform. After the lapse of half a century his memory with the public at large is rather a tradition connected with his oddities than a knowledge of his views or the services he rendered ; but that he left a lasting mark of his genius on the science he followed is shown daily in limbs preserved, which, before his time, would certainly have been " whipped off."

Most undoubtedly the broad philosophic view which he took of the healing art caused him to be opposed to the division of surgery into distinct departments. Specialists he detested ; nor did he hold physicians generally in any overwhelming estimation. One of his wittiest thrusts was made at the expense of the latter body, when talking with a friend respecting his prospects for his son. " Having strong medical interest at Bartholomew's," he said, " I shall certainly educate him to the profession, but I do not know which department I shall select for him. If he should turn out a clever, sensible chap I shall make a *surgeon* of him ; but should the fellow prove a fool I shall make a *physician* of him. Egad ! if we give a physician a start he can keep up the run by means of a *title*, but a surgeon cannot get on without a *head* ! " One can scarcely be surprised at the " strong medical opposition " his contemporaries exhibited against him after such scathing satire as this ; and, perhaps, allowances are due to the writer of an article hostile to Abernethy which appeared in the *Lancet* shortly after his death. The writer may have enjoyed a title himself.

"All who differed from him," says this worthy, "were treated contemptuously; and we firmly believe that this same rudeness drew more visitors from curiosity than it deterred by fear of insult. Let it be remembered that it caused the man to be talked about everywhere and this was sufficient to make his fortune Whatever an eccentric character says or does is considered clever, although the same doings would pass for nothing or for dulness if done by others The routinism to which Mr. Abernethy gave way for many years before his death was generally ludicrous but sometimes tragical. We have seen more than one instance where life was, in all human probability, sacrificed by an obstinate disregard of all examination of the case and a blind perseverance in one system of treatment inapplicable to the existing disease."

The probabilities are that a grain of salt must be taken with this latter statement. It sounds more like sophistry than the good casuistry which should stand in the way of decision respecting the merits of doctors.

John Abernethy died on April 21st, 1831, in his sixty-seventh year. To the last he was true to "My Book." He left a large family with the means of maintaining the position in which he himself lived; but nothing like so wealthy as he might have done had he cared for money or not have driven it away by oddities, temper, and a spirit of independence pushed at times, it must be confessed, to positive offence.

As before mentioned, his obituary in the *Lancet* consisted of two lines and was in the following words:—"Mr. Abernethy.—Just as we were going to press we received the painful (!) intelligence of the death of this gentleman. He expired at Enfield (his country house) on Monday last at half-past four o'clock." This, together with the few antagonistic words already quoted, was the paeon offered up by the leading medical journal in honour of the great departed! The *Times* of this date does not appear to have published any obituary of Abernethy. That paper was very busy over the Reform Bill and despatched the Duchess of Wellington in a dozen lines in a corner!

John Abernethy, however, needs little aid from contemporary journalism to render his memory lasting. He has already left behind him a monument more durable than the ephemeral utterances of his enemies—a monument more durable than any edifice

human ingenuity can erect. If we inquire into his private character we know it ranks as high as human virtue can place it. It may be thus summed up: Benevolence of the most unobtrusive kind; intense and persevering application to study and his professional duty, both in public and private; genius accompanied with a store of exuberant wit, and a temper and manner, though eccentric and abrupt, still exhibiting great kindness and beneficence. Never before or since has there been given within the walls of the College of Surgeons any oration but which sinks into insignificance when compared with those of Abernethy. He has contributed more to the science of surgery than any of his predecessors, and may be said to have been the founder of common-sense in medicine. "Dr. My-Book" has long since sunk into the grave, but it will be longer before he is forgotten.

ARMIGER BARCZINSKY.

Brief.

To A. C. P. H.

1

2.

'Twas your wit that took my fancy,
'Twas my sympathy that drew
You towards your fellow-labourer,
In the old days still so new,
When we met.
Ah ! the laughter sound and cheery,
Won from knowledge that no laws
Of the frigid world could fetter
Union from sheer friendship's cause,
'Twas Love's net.

3.

But our feet ne'er stumbled in it,
Hand in hand we trod the way
That was pleasant while it lasted,
Ah! so pleasant! bless the day!
When we met.
Life has stores of many pleasures,
If we take them when we can,
One, perhaps the best of all, is
For a woman and a man
To forget!

Margaret Grenfield's Repentance.

By AUDREY BURKE.

CHAPTER I.

IT is perhaps well for the domestic peace of quiet loving people that more women of the type to which Margaret Grenfield belonged are not born into the world, in order to work (let us hope unconsciously) mischief therein. It has been truly said that the daughters of Eve who have during hundreds of bygone years played their effectual parts in making fools of men have not been remarkable for the perfection of their physical beauty, while it is equally a fact that it is to the infinite variety which "custom" had no power to stale that the influence of such women was chiefly due. Moreover, in the eyes of those autocratic Queens of Hearts there must have lurked the fund of latent promise which acted as dazzling baits to lure men to their toils, and thence the power to work mischief which was accorded to them.

It was to her possession of such dangerous eyes as these that most of the troubles and trials which in after life beset Margaret Grenfield's path were in a great measure due. Although both she and her elder sister by a year or two were spoken of in the locality in which their lot was cast as exceptionally "pretty girls," the young person who in the bosom of her family was habitually addressed by the *petit nom* of Gretchen could, with the exception of a perfect form and of the, it is to be feared, not altogether "holy" eyes aforesaid, boast of no extraordinary claims to admiration. But if it were true, as true indeed it was, that her features were deficient in regularity, and that at the early age of sixteen her complexion was variable, and subject to the changes which exposures to sun and wind (an imprudence which very young girls are apt to deem of such little note), there was in Gretchen's idiosyncrasy a charm peculiarly her own. She was

essentially a bright creation, one of those blithesome beings who, like the song of birds on a fresh spring morning, are wont to produce an exhilarating effect on the spirits of even jaded and world wearied men ; and it was in part owing to the charm of her excitable and ardent nature that her father could refuse nothing to the joyous child in the sunshine of whose presence he—after a misspent life which had left him too tired and *blasé* for the quiet enjoyments of life to afford him any interest—warmed and to a certain extent rehabilitated himself. Colonel Grenfield, one of the handsomest and most admired men of his day, had married for love a pretty, mindless girl, and after the birth of three children, a boy and two girls, had, in the most open and shameless manner, deserted his family in order to live on the continent with a handsome and intellectual *demirep*. His absence from his family lasted several years, nor was it till death deprived him of the companionship of the notorious Adelaide Warton that he returned to the home which he had so heartlessly abandoned. Mrs. Grenfield, to the astonishment of society in general, condoned the errors of the delinquent, and received with a welcome for which the prodigal husband ought to have evinced greater gratitude than was apparent, the father of her children to his forsaken hearth.

When this event occurred, Margaret—who when the *village* colonel had bade adieu to home and duty was an infant in arms—had arrived at the age of sixteen ; her sister Lucie was two years her senior, and Arthur, the only son of the home, had arrived at the age of twenty-two. The latter was a rather singular specimen of his sex and age. Older in some respects than his years, he had early begun to take serious views of life and its responsibilities. The conduct of his father had not only shocked to an extreme degree his moral sense, but had inspired him with such an amount of contempt for, and even dislike to, the author of his being as rendered the return to the bosom of his family of that errant individual an occurrence in his opinion of very questionable good.

In addition to other sources of annoyance which that return occasioned him, there resulted from it the birth of a third daughter, whose advent—seeing that Colonel Grenfield's habits of extravagance had greatly diminished the resources of the family—was far from being a welcome event. Arthur, since he

had arrived at the age of seventeen and been able by means of a clerkship in the Ways and Means Office to relieve his mother of the burden of his support, had considered himself as in some sort the head of his otherwise unprotected family. It was a position in which he took, not unnaturally, a secret pride, and it was therefore equally natural that when the rightful master of the house was received, if not precisely with open arms, but without any marked tokens of disapprobation, by his indolent and far from strong-minded wife, the son who had made her wrongs his own should have felt not only indignant but aggrieved.

At the age of sixty-five Colonel Grenfield possessed the *beaux restes* of a handsome man, and but for the wholesome, although unpalatable reminders which in the shape of frequent attacks of gout held his still existent taste for expensive pleasures in check, he might by the sowing of a late crop of wild oats have imposed additional burdens on his already impoverished household. It was fortunate for that household that the necessity of leading what the colonel stigmatized as a "disgustingly humdrum" life led to no worse consequences than his renting a small farm of sixty acres which was situated in the near neighbourhood of the Waldershore cavalry barracks. Colonel Grenfield, who had long since left the army, entertained the erroneous idea that he had a genius for farming, and could realize a small fortune by supplying the London market with many of the necessities of life. Light-hearted Gretchen, with whose liveliness and beauty the returned prodigal had from the first moment of his renewed acquaintance with her been greatly charmed, was delighted with the change which her father's sudden fancy for bucolic pursuits opened out to her. During the fourteen years which had elapsed since Mrs. Grenfield had been, to all intents and purposes, left a widow, her children had known no other home than a dull house, in one of the dullest of London streets, and the pleasure which both the girls, but more especially Margaret, took in their new interests and occupations was intense. They insisted upon taking upon themselves the entire charge of the poultry department, and to these town-raised girls the surprises which fell to their lot in watching the ways and administering to the wants of these feathered domestic animals was a constant source of pleasure; but this enjoyment, together with that of a garden in which she could disport herself at will, was as nothing in comparison with

the delight which Gretchen took in the rides with her father which immediately on their taking up their abode at the Knoll farm became an institution in the family. The pride which Colonel Grenfield took in his attractive daughter induced him, much to the secret displeasure of his far more sensible son, to introduce his fair Margaret to the rather fast society which he was not long in gathering about him. The Light Blue Lancers, which at that time had their head quarters at Waldershore, was a very crack regiment indeed, and amongst the festive spirits who were made welcome at the Knoll Farm were several of the idle young officers belonging to the corps. Their chief attraction to the colonel's rural retreat was very evidently the bright young creature who was too thoroughly a woman not to be already something of a coquette, and Arthur Grenfield, severe in youthful wisdom, strongly objected to the footing of familiarity which, under his father's auspices, the obnoxious soldiers were at the farm permitted to enjoy.

"I cannot understand," he would sometimes say to his mother, "what my father is thinking of when he can allow such fellows as Gervase Donovan, for instance, to be constantly about the place. With young daughters, and especially with such a girl as Margaret, it is impossible to be too particular. I think it would be well if you were to give my father a hint that she is as yet both too young, as well as too skittish, to be introduced into society. Lucie is altogether different. She has not an idea of flirting in her nature, but Gretchen had much better be at a strict school than riding about with those Waldershore fellows, and making herself the talk of the county."

It was thus that Arthur Grenfield, whose habit it was to return daily after office hours to dine and sleep under the paternal roof, would make known to his mother the fears which in regard to his fair sister's future not a little disturbed his peace. He indulged in no delusive hopes *quoad* the possibility of rousing a woman so constitutionally indolent as was Mrs. Grenfield to exertion, but seeing that to remonstrate, even in the most dutiful of fashions, with the colonel required an amount of moral courage which he was fully conscious had not fallen to his lot, this thoroughly well-intentioned, but in his father's opinion very priggish, young man found a certain amount of satisfaction in giving utterance to his opinions to the mother, who could not, he

hoped and believed, be utterly indifferent to the well-being of her child.

"But, my dear boy, what can I do?" Mrs. Grenfield on one occasion, and whilst lying half asleep upon her sofa, exerted herself to ask. "Gret, I am sorry to say, has it all her own way with your father. She is the only one of his family for whom he cares. As for Lucie, poor girl, I believe he rather dislikes her than otherwise; while the way he has behaved about poor little Pussie is still more unnatural. You would hardly believe it, Alty, but he has never asked to see her since she was born, and the darling is three months old to-day."

"Oh, I can understand that," responded Arthur, whose own welcome of the infant Laura had been the reverse of enthusiastic. "Most men dislike babies, and a man who has reached his sixtieth year—that, however, is nothing to the purpose. My father's treatment of Lucie is as cruel as the manner in which he indulges Margaret in her every whim is regrettable in the extreme. When I think of her riding Donovan's horses, I find it hard to keep my temper; and there is that good-looking trooper, Sir John Fullerton's son, as every one in the regiment knows he is—I really believe that Gretchen is more than half in love with him. I watched her the other day, when he came for Donovan's horse, and when he lifted her from the saddle, which she, of course, ought not to have allowed him to do, she looked and smiled at him in a way that made me feel thoroughly ashamed of my sister."

Mrs. Grenfield, unemotional as her nature was, had not altogether escaped the very womanly pangs which jealousy of another's influence over her husband has the power, even in the coldest of female breasts, to arouse. What love she ever had to bestow had, in a mild and unobtrusive form, been given to her husband, and she was not, moreover, so entirely devoid of a latent love of power as to be capable of seeing without a pang that another—and that other her own fair daughter—had usurped the place which ought rightfully to be hers. But notwithstanding the occasional pin pricks of a not unrighteous displeasure, this poor lady, in whose breast even maternal love occupied but a small place, could not, by her son's urgent reasonings, be induced to interfere in the matter which this deposed head of his family had so much at heart. She had, in the days of his dic-

tatorship, unconsciously perhaps to herself, often secretly rebelled against the stern domestic rule of her son, and now it is more than doubtful whether she did not in her secret heart regret that the comparative vicinity of London to Waldershore and to the Knoll enabled this youthful censor to keep a watchful eye over the proceedings of his belongings. Under these circumstances her response to the boy's appeal was naturally the reverse of encouraging.

"If you have so poor an opinion of your sister, I wonder, my dear Alty, that you don't talk to her of her faults yourself. I have no influence over her whatever; but as she is so young, if you were to tell her yourself that you think her forward and unmaidenly——"

"But I do not think so, mother. I am only afraid of what she *may* possibly become, and when I contrast her character with that of Lucie—the one so good, so unselfish, so everything that a girl should be—I feel naturally indignant that while the undeserving one is petted and spoilt, the other is treated not only with unkindness, but with a neglect which can hardly fail to lead to painful comments. She is eighteen, and ought now to see other and more fitting society than that which she meets with in her father's house."

"I quite agree with you," Mrs. Grenfield languidly rejoined. "But you know as well as I do the difficulty in Lucie's case, and indeed I cannot altogether wonder at her father's objection to bringing her forward. Men are so selfish, so afraid of any possible annoyance to themselves that——"

"But because poor Lucie is not so bright as Margaret, because she occasionally betrays the absence of tact before visitors which so angers my father, is she never to have like other girls her chance of settling happily in life? She is too good, too unselfish to utter on her own account a single syllable of complaint. To all appearance—but then what may not her untold trials be?—she is quite contented with the dulness of her home life and engrossed heart and soul by her devotion to and admiration for Margaret, whose bright and egotistical joyousness of nature is in no way troubled by the cruel difference in their daily lives which, owing to my father's unjust partiality, is so constantly apparent."

The fact that Lucie was Arthur's favourite sister rendered him perhaps a little unfair towards Gretchen. As is the case with

many of his sex whose insight into character is limited, he drew conclusions regarding the inner workings of female nature which were totally unjustifiable by facts. For instance, in the wonderfully expressive eyes with which nature had—regardless of consequences—gifted his attractive sister, this self-opiniated young man firmly believed that he could read a desire for conquest which could not but lead to evil; and utterly impossible would it have been to convince him that nature and not Gretchen herself was answerable for the witching orbs which all unbidden played the mischief with the hearts and imaginations of the so-called stronger sex. "*N'est pas courtisane qui veut*," wrote that wondrous analyst of the human heart, Henri de Balzac, whose contention was that if wives and good women were endowed with some of the varied powers by means of which the less virtuous of their sex hold men under their thrall, there would be in this sinful world fewer faithless husbands and more happy and contented wives. That Margaret Grenfield was born with much of the power of which de Balzac wrote was owing to no fault of hers. To exercise that power came as naturally to her as did the gift of speech, and her brother, in mentally accusing her of harbouring a forward or unmaidenly thought, did her a wrong, which, because it was half unspoken, was none the less unjust and wanting in brotherly love and tenderness.

He was not a bad-hearted young fellow, that only son of a prodigal father, but it was perhaps fortunate for the smoothing down of domestic differences that soon after the return to his lares and penates of their prodigal owner, an appointment in the telegraph office at the Cape removed the self-appointed guardian of his sister's honour to a safe distance from his home. In that home he was not greatly missed. Little Pussie, the child of her father's old age, regretted perhaps for a while the big brother who was wont good-naturedly to occasionally join her in a game of romps, but Lucie's idiosyncrasy was of a kind too calm and contented for any change in her daily habits to have a lasting effect upon her mind. Colonel Grenfield felt relieved by the absence of a son whose steadiness of conduct not only contrasted unpleasantly with his own past life, but with a flightiness of speech and manner which were unsuited to his years; whilst Mrs. Grenfield, taking the matter as was her "way," with quietude and submission, "shed a few natural tears and dried them soon."

CHAPTER II.

ON one bright spring morning, and shortly before the departure of the Light Blue Lancers to other quarters was publicly announced, the following paragraph made its (to many) very unwelcome appearance in one of the society papers.

"The neighbourhood of Waldershore has been thrown into considerable commotion by the elopement of a young gentleman, who, although the son of a baronet, has during many months past been serving as a private in the Light Blue Lancers, with the beautiful and youthful daughter of a retired cavalry colonel. The hero of this romantic episode had, some days previous to his escapade, purchased his discharge, and the happy pair were, it is said, married in London, even before the young lady had been missed from her home. The united ages of the pair do not, we learn, amount to more than thirty-six years."

It is needless to say that the reading of this paragraph, the intelligence contained in which happened, unfortunately, to be true, added not a little to the distress of mind which Margaret's rash and impulsive act had entailed upon her relations. She had, unhappily, fallen a prey to the machinations of a strikingly handsome young man, who had quickly succeeded in awakening her compassion for the victim—as he had the cleverness to make her believe—of paternal rigour and the evil influence of a detested step-mother. Understanding well how impossible it would be to obtain her father's consent to a marriage with a penniless suitor, such as the man who had gradually obtained a fatal influence over her affections, Gretchen, whose interviews with Frederick Fullerton were all the sweeter for being stolen, consented in a moment of madness—for which her extreme youth and the grave errors attendant on her education and mode of life could alone, in part, excuse—to reward the passionate love of her unprincipled adorer by becoming his wife.

To describe the state of mind in which Colonel Grenfield was, by this domestic calamity, thrown would be impossible. His pride, as well as such affection as he was capable of feeling, were wounded to the quick, for both had been centred in Gretchen, and she, the "most ungrateful and heartless of daughters, had both deceived and brought him to shame."

"Never, whilst I live, will I see her face again," he, in speaking of the girl to his wife, frantically declared. "She may starve with her vagabond husband, for any aid that I shall give her; the bed which she has made for herself will, I hope, be a miserable one, and her pillow stuffed with thorns."

It was characteristic of Colonel Grenfield that whilst smarting under the cruel gnawing of the serpent's tooth, he never even to himself admitted the fact that, in a great measure, to his own folly was due the misconduct of his child. That others both might and should bear the consequences of pretty Gretchen's ingratitude and folly was a truth which soon became disagreeably evident, for in the blindness of his rage, the colonel declared that there should be no more gay doings at Knoll Farm, that the carriage and horses should be sold, and the strictest economy be observed. As for himself, the proximity to London of his so-called home enabled him to enjoy many of the pleasures which were congenial to his tastes and habits. He, being a member of more than one club, could soothe his wounded feelings by billiards and by whist, and was, seeing that a bachelor's life had always been more congenial to his tastes and habits than a domestic one, by no means a person to be commiserated.

Meanwhile, Margaret had even more promptly than is usual in such cases recovered from the "fitful fever," during one of the spasms of which she had committed the rash act that had apparently marred her life. In after days, when she no longer either thought or understood as a child, the delusion under which, as regarded Frederick Fullerton, she had laboured became a source of wonder to herself, and after a three years' experience of marriage, during which time she had written, but in vain, many penitent letters to her home, she had grown bitterly to regret the infatuation by which she had been led astray. The lad of two-and-twenty who had half cajoled and half frightened her into folly had nothing besides his very remarkable good looks to recommend him to any sensible woman's notice. Of those personal gifts he was extravagantly vain, so vain, in fact, that to his inordinate vanity was chiefly due the signal and rapid fashion in which he had come to grief. His beauty rendered him at the commencement of his acquaintance with their class an object of admiration to the fair and frail, but seeing that he was, to quote King Solomon's words, a "young man

without understanding," the free lances of society soon wearied of his companionship, and in order to preserve his place in their good graces, he, impelled thereto by the morbid vanity which was his ruling passion, lavished with a reckless hand his small substance in "riotous living." This course of proceedings, together with the costly gifts which his fatal intimacies entailed, resulted, after a stormy interview with his father, in his enlistment in the Light Blue Lancers.

One string, however, to his bow the foolish young fellow still possessed, and that thing did not in his hour of greatest need fail him. An old and wealthy relation, one of those weak-minded widow women who, chiefly on account of their physical advantages, entertain a kind of fanatical affection for worthless young men, was so touched by what she considered the romantic side of Fred Fullerton's character and conduct, that she not only bought his discharge, but on his marriage received him and his bride as guests in her comfortable London house. Mrs. Howatt's residence was in Queen Anne Street, a locality which her relative and godson despised as utterly unworthy of his position and pretensions; nor did he scruple, when alone with his young wife, to shower ridicule not only on the household arrangements but on the person of his benefactress. His conduct in this respect absolutely shocked the girl, whose eyes were already opened to much in her husband's character which jarred against her moral sense, and of which, both for her own sake and for his, she intuitively felt ashamed. Her own liking for and gratitude to Fred's benefactress were very great, and she received in the pleasure which the old lady evidently took in her society ample amends for the neglect which after little more than a fortnight of married life her boy husband caused her to experience.

Fred Fullerton hated to be bored, and loved to display his handsome person wherever there were found together women whose notice was in his opinion worthy of cultivation. He was quick to perceive the liking which Mrs. Howatt had taken to his young bride, and frequently urged the latter to exert her influence over his godmother, in order to obtain for him certain advantages for which his selfish nature yearned.

"Why," he would say to Margaret, "cannot the old girl give us a sum of money down, or at any rate allow us something

handsome to enable us to escape from this horrible old barrack? Your father, too—who was by way of making such a favourite of you—is in my opinion behaving like a brute—won't even answer a letter that you write to him."

On one occasion, when he ventured to indulge in remarks such as these, Margaret had up and spoke.

"I will not hear my father spoken of disrespectfully by you," she said hotly; "if you must call any one a brute, let it be me. For a daughter who could desert her home as I did no name is too vile. I only wish," she added, as a passionate flood of tears relieved her over-burdened heart, "that I could live the last three months over again, and find myself a free and happy girl in my dear father's home."

Now it must, I think, be admitted that when after only three months' experience of married life words such as these could, between a husband and his wife, find utterance, the love which they had sworn to each other must have been more than beginning to wane. Margaret had discovered, when it was too late, how far better and wiser it is to bear the evils under the burdens of which we fret and fume than to seek in a change of which we know nothing for possible relief. Her home, notwithstanding the injudicious over-indulgence of her father, had not been a happy one. She had felt herself to be an object of jealousy to her mother, whilst Arthur had made no secret of the far greater amount of affection and esteem which he entertained for Lucie than those which her flighty self inspired him with. The older girl, her many excellent qualities notwithstanding, was felt by Gretchen to be anything but a congenial companion, and this circumstance, for she dearly loved her good unselfish sister, did not contribute to render her home life happier. But, after all, why descant on the palpable motives for a young girl's act of folly, or her reasons for rushing into the arms of the first man whom she believes capable of sheltering her from the ills of life? It is sufficient to say that Gretchen saw in Fred Fullerton her ideal of a hero, and that it was fortunate for her that her love fancy was built on no more solid foundations than those I have just recorded. Had she not within a very short trial of married life awakened from her short love dream she could not have borne without agonizing grief a blow which without a warning note doomed her at the age of twenty to widowhood.

The career of Fred Fullerton was cut short after this wise. Being considered, young in years although he was, to be good at steeplechase riding, one of his sporting acquaintances fancied him as the "gentleman rider" in a coming event of a horse which was well known to be a difficult one to steer.

"It will want all you know to keep him steady, for though he's a picture to look at, he is the rummest one to go that I ever threw a leg over."

Fred listened with a supercilious smile to this succinct description of his *monture*. By both his vanity and his cupidity he was alike rendered impervious to the well-meant advice of more than one of his intimates who would fain have persuaded him to refrain from risking his neck upon Norah Creina ; the foolish fellow's reputation for pluck was, he believed, at stake, and, moreover, the owner of the skittish filly had *sub rosa* (for, as is well known amongst sporting men, gentlemen riders are supposed to do gratis their often dangerous work) slipped a douceur into his hand.

To enter into any particulars regarding the death ride, for such in the case of Frederick Fullerton the steeplechase in question proved to be, would be a work of supererogation ; it is sufficient to say that he in his bravery of yellow satin vest and purple sleeves was carried lifeless into the Railway Hotel at Burbridge, in the vicinity of which town the steeplechase took place, and that with as little delay as possible the remains of the ill-fated youth were removed to Mrs. Howatt's house.

But for the truly motherly tenderness which Fred's rich relation evinced in this crisis in the girl's life towards Margaret, the shock which the latter had, by the awfully sudden death of her husband, received, would have been far more severely felt ; but Mrs. Howatt, whose own married life had not been without its trials, had been led, through her growing appreciation of her attractive guest, to a closer examination of her godson's character and temperament than it had ever before occurred to her to make. This examination had enabled her, with her mind's eye, to see the rocks ahead of the frail barque in which, on the ocean of wedlock, Margaret had so early in life set sail, and the kindly woman, with a tact and judgment for which few of her acquaintances would have given her credit, made, as soon as it became advisable to do so, a very sensible use of the discoveries which she had made. By degrees,

and without wounding any of the susceptibilities of the young widow, who for no inconsiderable time after her husband's death laboured under the delusion that he was in some sort worthy of her regrets, this judicious friend succeeded in dispersing the halo with which Death possesses the faculty of surrounding for a while even the least deserving of his victims. The desire to be happy is so firmly engrafted in the human breast that Margaret's tears, blessed as she was with the gifts of beauty, youth and health, were, sooner perhaps than Mrs. Howatt had ventured to hope, exchanged for a return of the smiles which, in the autumn of her days, the excellent lady hailed as gleams of sunshine across her own downward path. In Margaret's confiding frankness lay one of her most endearing charms, and, seeing she made no secret to her friend of her longing to be reconciled to her relations, Mrs. Howatt lived in constant dread of a separation from the girl whose companionship became daily more essential to her comfort.

In order to bind by ties of gratitude this impulsive young creature more closely to her side, the older widow (who still wore solemn black in memory of a bad husband who had for twenty years and upwards slept in an unhonoured grave) caused, on one fine spring morning, immense surprise to the crape-covered young mourner, by the information that she—Mrs. Howatt—had by deed of gift made over to her dearly loved relative and companion the sum of £6,000.

"I had intended, my dear child," she said, "to leave you this small token of affection in my will, but as my life may be inconveniently prolonged, I have thought it better to forestall that event by placing the money at once in your hands."

"But, dear friend," remonstrated Margaret, "what have I done that I should be thus generously rewarded? You are heaping coals of fire on my head, and making me wretched with the thought that I can never return any of the obligations which you have laid upon me."

"But you *can* repay them, and that tenfold, my pretty one: you have only to stay with me, to make my home yours, and be unto me as a daughter."

"Which I will do thankfully, unless—but no, that hope is over. Still, I shall not cease, dear friend and second mother—for such you have been to me—from my efforts to obtain forgiveness

of my father. I long to see once again those whom I so cruelly and ungratefully abandoned, but you will always, and under every change of circumstances, have almost the warmest place in my heart ; you have been so patient with me, so lenient to my faults, and have made me feel, as no severity of reproof could have done, the heinousness of my conduct, that I should indeed deserve still heavier punishment than is being meted out to me if I did not feel for you the affection of a daughter."

With this promise Mrs. Howatt found herself obliged to be content. She had confidence, notwithstanding the girl's past follies, in the innate generosity of her protégée's nature, and showed herself willing to accept the second place in the warm heart, every secret of which was laid bare before her, of her godson's widow.

After the tragic death of her husband, Margaret had once more made an attempt to soften her father's heart towards her. To this appeal, couched although it was in terms of the deepest humility and contrition, no answer was returned, and Margaret, driven almost to despair by a displeasure so utterly relentless, endeavoured to endure with such patient cheerfulness as she was able to assume the lot which their sin had drawn upon herself. During two more long, tedious months her banishment from her home continued, and then an event which was brought about by the exercise of her own courageous will had the effect of once more changing the entire future of her life.

Colonel Grenfield, in order to enjoy as much as his declining years permitted the recovered freedom of his bachelor existence, had hired a small lodging in the vicinity of the clubs. It was ~~not~~ a cheerful place of abode, and as day followed day and week succeeded week without their bringing to the *blast* man of the world any renewal of the excitements which had formerly supplied the place of more healthful pleasures, a great weariness of life took possession of his spirit. There were times when, but for the obstinate pride which formed a part of his idiosyncrasy, he would gladly have welcomed back to his home his errant and ungrateful daughter, whose image, in her girlish beauty, was, as he sat in his often solitary home, for ever obtruding itself on his thoughts.

One rainy afternoon in mid-November, when, after losing at his club several rubbers of whist, he had betaken himself, together with a fit of neuralgia, to his chambers, he was aroused from a

train of gloomy thought by the gentle opening of his room door. The sound irritated him, and imagining the intruder to be his valet, he said roughly, for a temporary cessation of pain was leading him to hope for the forty winks in which before dinner he was wont to indulge :

"What the devil do you want, Andrews? I should have been asleep in five minutes if you hadn't come in to disturb me."

"It isn't Andrews, father," murmured a sweet low voice behind his chair. "It is only your poor Gretchen, who does so long and pray to be forgiven," and the next moment the girl, who looked in her deep widow's mourning like the child which in years she still almost was, had sunk on her knees before the parent she had offended, and with streaming eyes was looking with eloquent pleading in their blue depths to his.

The reconciliation so unpremeditatedly brought about between Margaret and her family proved as complete as it was, in the opinion of one person at least, disappointing and regrettable. Mrs. Howatt, the exception amongst Gretchen's many friends who could not bring herself to look with unmitigated satisfaction on the young widow's return to the Knoll Farm, was too good and too unselfish a woman to allow her personal loss to have an undue effect upon her feelings. It was for Margaret herself that she feared, and the chances of her being again thrown into temptation's way were, in her point of view, so many, that the lonely woman trembled whilst she prayed for the safety of the girl whom she loved as though she had been a daughter of her own. It was with a sensation of relief that she read in her first letter from Margaret that the Knoll Farm was no longer the gay resort of idle officers from the neighbouring barracks, and that, in that respect at least, she might, as regarded Mrs. Fullerton's well-being, be easy in her mind. Colonel Grenfield had in his wrath registered a vow that no "military scamp" should henceforth cross his threshold; and this vow, seeing that it was to his own advantage as well as that of his well-loved child, it seemed highly probable that he would keep.

A Canadian Camping Out.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

THE place where we camped out was called "Presqu'Ile," and the water which lay before the camp was an arm of the great inland sea, Lake Ontario.

The tents were all pitched on the shingle, or rather on the grass which adjoined the shingle, by the edge of the bay, and behind was a wood of cedars and pines. On the opposite shore there were softly wooded slopes, where a tangle of raspberry and huckleberry bushes and a grove of hazel nuts were fast ripening in the hot August sun, and at our right hand, on a piece of land jutting into the water, was a white lighthouse. Here, then, you have our *mise en scène*.

I arrived at the camp late one August evening, having been rowed over in a boat from the village at which I was staying, and when we had had tea under a clump of pines, which were surrounded by a sort of fence of canvas-cloth fastened round the trunks (this to keep out the cows), I was taken down to the beach. For the camp was having its first big fire. Camp fires are institutions not to be entered upon lightly or unadvisedly. The whole camp must assist to gather wood, male and female, young and old, and the higher the blaze, and the bigger the roar, the greater the success of the fire. It ought to be seen, too, a long way off, and the gazers ought to be under the impression that the present camp has at least succeeded in setting fire to the Presqu'Ile forest, and will therefore be summarily dealt with by Government and Sir John MacDonald. When we got down to the beach the fire was in full swing and full roar, and the camp had gathered round it on benches, and were laughing and talking gaily. An American girl had arrived that day, and she "had the floor," to use her own expression, the camp acting as audience. She was describing very amusingly her experiences while camping out lately on one of the thousand islands in the St. Lawrence; how it poured for three days steadily, and a bath was unnecessary, that being provided free of charge in the tent, *nolens volens*; how some

wretched boy bereft the cow of its bell, and the creature incontinently ate two days' provisions during the night ; and lastly, how she ruined her best hat. This was the most exciting and thrilling tragedy of all, and the female portion of our camp scarcely breathed. I am really sorry that I forgot the details, but I could never tell them as she did.

They made a very pretty picture under the pale clear light of the sky, which had a faint dull red still in the west ; the sun seems so loath to set in these regions and give place to night ; it holds sway as long as it can, and then exits—gloriously !

The tents stood out ghost-like, and like white sentinels behind, the water dimpled and reflected the blaze in front, the flames played luridly on the surrounding figures, and in the foreground was the slim girlish figure in its blue serge skirt and jersey, laced with crimson, and with a crimson Tam o' Shanter set well back from the bright sun-tinted face. Being British, we observed these things from behind, finding it difficult to shake off the national reserve, and we were left hospitably and coolly to ourselves ; when we grew friendly they would meet us more than half way, meanwhile they did not disturb themselves. The fire burnt itself out at last, only leaping up fitfully at intervals ; the matrons retired to put their little ones to bed. Some one rowing home in the dusk began to sing “Kathleen Mavourneen ;” there was silence round the dying fire, and presently we all dropped off to our camp beds, and to sleep, by the dully breaking ripples of the lake.

Next morning the camp was early astir, for breakfast had to be made long before the heat of the day began, but being British and lazy, some of us lay till a voice outside announced that the tea was made and would be all drunk in a quarter of an hour. That hurried our toilet, we determined to bathe next morning before breakfast, and were soon eating that meal under the pines, and finding it very good indeed. Two of our party were girls, beside myself, and they were blessed by brothers whose example I should like to set as a burning and shining light to some British boys I know. All the hard work, all the disagreeable work—in fact, all the work, save the washing of the dishes, was appropriated by these two, and besides this they acted as amusers in chief to the party, and were held responsible for heat and mosquitoes, and rain when that came. The camp, as a rule, did not *do* much. It lounged in hammocks, and read twenty-five cent

English novels, pirated from the pirate States ; its junior members fell hourly into the water head foremost from the tiny boat-piers, to be rescued by *pater familias*, and received with a slap and a kiss ; it made dinner lazily and ate it ; then it lounged again, and in the evening it woke up ! People rowed then, over to the other side for nuts or raspberries, or for rowing's sake ; they walked seldom, walking being an exercise despised by Canadians, or they gathered in the largest tents and played the inevitable euchre. We were on the water a great deal, cards being an insult to nature and the lovely sky, and we rowed far. Mosquitoes and heat, the two drawbacks of camp life, vanished in the cool air, and the sky was radiant beyond all words. And then under the peace of the stars in the faint blue, we returned home, while the dark pines watched behind the tents.

On most mornings we bathed early, walking beyond the light-house, but I never fancied a bath in the curiously heavy water of the lake. It had no life and no buoyancy, it never seemed really *cold*, it had not the sparkle and the refreshment of the sea ; one went to it as a duty and a necessary, and found it as disagreeable as some duties and necessaries are.

Other mornings we fished—early too, and caught a good deal, but one had to get up so very early for this pastime, that to one to whom early rising is not a delight and a glory, the game was *not* worth the price. Caught by others, too, the fish tasted quite as good, if not better, and I never possessed any angler's pride, nor do I desire any. I am much too impatient to follow the example of the "Complete Angler," however delightfully he may write. If the fish would be caught at once, I would not mind, but to sit in a boat holding a line and gazing into vacancy, awaiting *their* pleasure ! no, thank you !

We had only one day of rain, and it was not so amusing as the gay American's description of it. We lived in waterproofs, and did not dare touch the tent at night, for wherever one touched, a drop made way and was followed, and we ate our meals in a pool of water while waterspouts descended down our necks. In Canada the weather does things extravagantly, from the absurd way the thermometer can descend, to the height to which it can attain, and when Canadian rains come, they come—largely !

Another day we had a storm of wind, and the bay roused itself to a sullen and heavy fury, and dashed, heavily still, upon

the beach, and the whole lake was a mass of tossing breakers. That was the day the camp had its one adventure, the heroine being the young American. She had left the camp for a little, and had just returned, and was generally to be seen surrounded by a coterie of lads who were her devoted slaves. One of them had just brought over a new canoe which the young lady announced her intention of trying for the first time, and in spite of the remonstrance of every lady in the camp, enter it she did upon this very evening of storm, and off she went while the matrons retired in high dudgeon. They would not watch her, they said. I happened to be deep in one of the twenty-five cent novels, and I forgot about the girl till dusk, when one of my cousins put his hand over the book, stopped the hammock, and asked if I knew that she had not returned, and that a party were off in boats seeking for her. They came back after dark. There was no sign of the girl ; the lady who had seen her last said the frail little craft had been dancing like a cockle shell in the waves, and a gloom crept over the whole camp. Her relatives—a young married lady and her husband—took the matter very coolly. She always turned up, they said ; if she could have killed herself by trying, she would not be alive now ; they "guessed" she was all right ! We listened in troubled amazement, and another party rowed off in another direction, to return with the same answer.

Next morning the wind was still high, some of us had not slept through the noise of the waves breaking on the shingle, and through thinking if it could be possible that the bright young life had really perished, and I went off to the woods with my novel early. When I returned about twelve, for news, the first person I saw was the young lady herself. She was swinging luxuriantly in a hammock and eating "candy," and five young men were in attendance. All right ? Oh, yes ! She had been drifted over to the other side by the waves, nearly swamped several times, and the canoe had been capsized just as she made the land, but she found people she knew were camping only a mile off when she went through the wood to strike the village, and she stayed with them, and rowed back in the morning. And then she went on with her chat unconcerned. One really felt foolish to have been alarmed ; but then, as the oldest inhabitant of the camp said, shaking his

grey head, any one *else* would have been drowned half-way over!

The long, hot, sunny days came to end at last. I looked quite regretfully at my two favourite resorts, when I left them. One was in the wood, in a tangle of shrubs amongst the brown pine stems, the other was in a niche beside the lighthouse where the waves fell at my very feet ; I had grown accustomed to their lethargic way ; poor things, they could not help that they were not the great Atlantic ; and we ate our last green corn more than regretfully. That is a product of which Canada may be proud, though she never mentions it when she vaunts of her snow-shoeing and her tobogganing. It is eaten inelegantly, dipping one end into butter and salt, as you go on, but the result makes elegance a thing unregretted. And last of all we rowed back to the village, in the most glorious sunset of all the glorious sunsets. The splendour of colour in the west was indescribable ; we never even spoke of it ; we only sat silent till the glory faded and the stars peeped out.

The house seemed very close, and seemed to hem in and limit one, after the pine woods and the water, but there were alleviations, and as it rained shortly after, we sighed when we thought of the others, waterproofed and dripping, and lunching in pools.

And yet how pleasant the whole thing seems, looking back.

One forgets the drawbacks and the inconveniences, and the peculiar aggravation of finding that the cow had eaten all the butter in the night!—that cow was really the crumpled rose-leaf of the camp, and ought to have had a page to itself, but even it is softened in the kindly haze of memory. We forgive it the butter and the peculiarly trying way it had of tripping over the tent ropes, and jangling its bell loudly in one's sleeping ear, for the sake of other things.

The sunsets first, unforgettable—the dimpling, flashing water, catching the reflection, the songs wafted from a softening distance, and pealing sweet on the ear, the leaping, hissing flames of the fire, playing redly on the tents and on the black pines, sentinel behind, the hush of the quiet woods, where insects hummed restfully and cousins brought you raspberries on a cool green leaf, the twenty-five centers—for some of them were Ruskin, though I hope he may never know it!—and lastly, for I cannot leave it out, the green corn! For these and much more, the

Canadian camping is one of memory's pleasant pictures, "to flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude," and to smile over happily.

But do not, oh reader, be tempted to essay the same experience in Britain ; we can do most things, but we cannot camp out with safety. For Scotch and English woods have a lurking possibility of damp, behind the dryest days, and who can call the weather safe for twenty-four hours ? *"The wittier the waywarder,"* says Rosalind, and truly British weather may be said, without calumny, to be—well, wittier than that of most climes !

Five on a Yacht.

AN EPISODE.

THE setting sun was throwing a path of molten gold across the waters of the Solent, shining on the yachts that lay at anchor off Cowes, making each delicate spar and cord stand out with vivid distinctness against a background of ruffled, dark grey water and purple headland. On the deck of one of these yachts stood a tall young English girl, clad in the orthodox blue serge. She was undoubtedly pretty, but just at the moment when my story commences there was a frown on her fair forehead which did not become her.

She had just said to her mother, "This is all very pretty, but I feel rather like 'one who treads alone some banquet hall deserted,' and I confess I don't prefer Cowes in September to the beautiful purple moors. I don't quite see the object."

To which Mrs. Berresford had replied, "Well, my dear, it may be a little difficult to divine what should keep a fortunate young man like Charlie Hume, with a moor in Ross-shire, dawdling on here out of season, but your own object I should have thought was sufficiently well defined."

And it was then Miss Berresford had frowned. Charlie Hume had been particularly attentive to pretty Hero Berresford during the foregoing season. Later they had made items of the same house party, in a lovely old house on the river, and now she and her mother were guests on board his yacht, "The Juliet." He had declared to her that the Solent was infinitely preferable out of season.

"You move about," he said, "always in a crowd. You carry always the same atmosphere with you, which utterly prevents your ever seeing things in a fresh, novel light. Strike out a line of your own for once and see how you like it."

Hero had not been a dull pupil in the school of Vanity Fair, in which she had been brought up. She was not disposed to be squeamish, or to call a spade an agricultural implement, and yet latterly, when her mother had made remarks like the foregoing, she had felt irritated.

"What I cannot understand," pursued Mrs. Berresford, ignorant of the workings of her daughter's mind, "is the fact of Nettie's presence here. Mr. Hume is really a little too good-natured at times, and of course your father would let me make no excuse for her when he asked her. It is perfectly absurd Mr. Berresford's nonsense about that child."

The child alluded to was Nettie Foster, the daughter of a dead sister of Mr. Berresford, and consequently Hero's cousin. Her uncle had adopted her as a child, and had grown very fond of her, a fondness not shared by Mrs. Berresford, who frequently thought her a nuisance.

"I can't see that her being here matters," said Hero. "Poor little Nettie, she will enjoy the novelty of yachting, and the sea air may strengthen her."

"Oh, that's all nonsense," said Mrs. Berresford; "she's strong enough. Well, she may as well make herself useful and bring me up my book now; it is a little dull just now, till our cavaliers return," and she called, "Nettie." Whereupon there appeared on deck a dainty little figure, a girl who seemed little more than a child. Her limbs were small and delicate, her hands and feet tiny and exquisitely made, her face was pale, with small, finely-cut features, and her hair, hair which even in the sea mists curled all over her head, was dark and silky. Everything about her seemed in miniature except her great dark eyes, which with her want of colour gave an air of extreme fragility to her appearance. Possibly, however, Mrs. Berresford may have been right, since she had known her from childhood, in declaring that she was one of those delicate-looking girls, who are in reality extremely wiry, and far stronger than their more robust-looking sisters. She, too, was dressed in the neatest of serge frocks, but as Hero often said of her, "Nettie usually contrives to look effective," and to-night she wore on her dark curls a little scarlet fisher cap.

When she returned obediently with her aunt's book, Hero was

saying, "Who is this Sir William Lennox whom Mr. Hume has gone to meet?"

"Well, his chief interest is, I should say, that he is one of the wealthiest men in the United Kingdom. For the rest, he is a harmless, rather old than middle-aged gentleman, and a widower. Many people hoped that he might be persuaded to marry again, but he has proved wary and shy, and declined many temptingly-baited hooks presented to his consideration. I have met him several times, and we get on very well, which is fortunate, since his obvious duty for the next week or two is to minister to my amusement. To that end is he captured and brought here."

Hero again looked cross, while her mother smiled, and Nettie said, "Here they come."

The dinghey came alongside, and Charlie Hume sprang on board and helped his friend up the gangway.

The party proved a well assorted one, and did Hume's judgment credit, for it requires talent to bring the right people together on board a yacht. Youth and beauty were well represented by Miss Berresford, and Sir William supplied a good share of wit, for he was a festive old person, brimming over with good stories, which he was delighted to tell to people to whom they were fresh, and just of an age when men of his stamp are younger than most boys. As for Charlie, he was, as his friends declared him, such a "nailing good sort," that everybody got on with him. He was really attached to Miss Berresford, and had told Sir William that he intended to marry her if she would have him. Sir William did not want this intimation to make him adopt the rôle intended for him, and to "take off," as he perhaps rather crudely put it, "the old girl."

The "old girl" was, however, much devoted to her wonderfully preserved complexion, and not of a very active disposition like Sir William, and she preferred, when the sun shone hot on the sea, spending her time below, lying down, or writing letters. The baronet would have found it rather dull if Nettie had not been there, "and," thought Mrs. Berresford, "it really was quite providential having brought her after all."

"Poor little Nettie," said Hero, "how she enjoys it all."

But Charlie, good chap as he was, was not so sure about this. He thought the large dark eyes of the child, of whom they all

took so little notice, often looked sad and wistful. And he reproached himself that she should always be told off to Sir William, whom he liked, in a way, but considered, himself, a bit of a bore.

One moonlight night, when the others had gone to bed, he happened to be smoking a late cigar on deck, and caught sight of Nettie's little red cap against the tafrail.

"Hulloh, Miss Nettie, why ain't you in bed?" he exclaimed.

She lifted her great eyes to his, and the moon shone on two great tears in them.

"What!" he said, and his voice lowered instinctively with pity. "Are you crying up here all by yourself, poor little girl?"

A feeling of protective tenderness, which he had felt more than once before for the poor, fragile, lonely little creature, stole over him.

"Don't take any notice," she stammered. "I didn't think any one would see me. I don't sleep very well, and I often creep up here. I love all this scene by moonlight, it is so beautiful, and yet it makes me sad"—here the tears rolled down—"and I feel more lonely than ever. Can you"—wistfully—"understand?"

She looked up at him, and her sweet red lips were trembling.

He did understand or thought he did, and he knelt down beside her. The feeling of protective tenderness was very strong, she looked so small and white and helpless. He felt very strong and big, and, in a curious sort of way, ashamed of himself for being so. He put his great arm round her tiny waist. She was only a baby, he thought. Her curly head nestled on his shoulder quite naturally, and, after one or two little shivering sobs, which he could feel shaking her delicate frame, she seemed to grow happier. They began to talk, in low murmured tones, and she told him many of the quaint fancies she had woven in her loneliness. He felt the naïve flattery and he liked watching her smiles return, but soon sent her down below. She was delicate, he remembered, and should not be out in the night air. But after this they had many such talks together in the moonlight. She begged him not to forbid her, or to tell her aunt and cousin. "They would say I mustn't, because

of my health, and so rob me of the best hours in my life, and I am quite, quite strong," she insisted, with pretty innocent pleading.

And Charlie couldn't help promising. He did think Mrs. Berresford sat on her, and it was a shame, she was such a dear little baby. He couldn't find it in his heart to get her into trouble, and he really did feel towards this delicate little maiden of eighteen, as if she were a snubbed and neglected child, into whose lonely life he could bring a little pleasure.

The four young (for to this adjective Sir William would certainly have laid claim) people made endless excursions at this time, and in all their expeditions Sir William's society fell to Nettie's share, for the other two were always together. Still Hero had nothing of particular interest to impart to her mother in reply to the latter's persistent, and to the girl now irritating, nightly catechism. Nettie continued to wear her pathetic little air, but Sir William looked extremely pleased with himself. Apparently he did not object to a child's society. He had once said, in reply to a lady, who asked him at what age he considered that children became interesting :

"Well, let me see. Oh, girls at about seventeen, just when they begin to 'take notice.'"

It seemed that Nettie met with his approval in this respect, for he was most gallant towards her.

One day, however, he was not with them in one of their rambles and Nettie, wandering off by herself, found a little lonely bay, where the sea crept softly in over fine yellow sand. The temptation to paddle overcame her, and she took off her shoes and stockings.

Further along the cliff Hero was sitting, with her lap full of delicate sea pinks, and Charlie sprawling at her feet. Presently the latter remarked, with would-be carelessness, giving voice to a thought that had occupied him some time :

"I wonder where that child is!"

"Perhaps you had better go and see," said Hero, for anxiety is surely infectious. "I will wait here."

Charlie was not long in descrying the truant. She was perched upon a solitary rock, in the middle of the little bay, and a

small river of incoming tide had treacherously crept round her retreat.

"Oh," she cried, "how glad I am you've come! I was getting so frightened."

"You little goose, make a dash for it," he cried.

"I am afraid to," she said in her timid, childish way.

So he came across to her—the water did not reach to his knees—and took her in his arms and carried her ashore. She clasped his neck and hid her eyes and clung to him in delicious alarm. He lost his head, he could not help it, and, before he released her he kissed her, almost violently, on her silken curls and pretty trembling lips. Then he put her down and brought her her tiny shoes and stockings. Her little bare feet were lovely. He thought he had never seen anything so small, as he helped her to dry them with his handkerchief. He took them both in one big brown hand and stooped to kiss them too, but started guiltily away when he heard Hero's voice calling, "Where are you? Is she all right?"

When Miss Berresford appeared round the rocks, she found him gazing intently at a distant steamer, and Nettie putting on her shoes with her back to him.

That night Charlie paced the deck restlessly, but no little red cap appeared above the hatchway. He felt disturbed and unhappy. He was beginning to realize where he was drifting and he felt, as he expressed it, "rather a cur;" circumstances were getting a little too complex for our honest young Briton.

The next morning Sir William informed them that business letters summoned him home that afternoon. He expressed great regret and begged that his "dear little friend, Miss Nettie, would have compassion on him and take him for one last charming walk."

Nettie flashed one glance at Charlie, but consented, and presently Sir William helped her into the dinghey, with a most protective air. It struck Charlie that he was an insufferable old ass, and that he wasn't sorry he was going.

After the old gentleman had bidden them all farewell, two or three hours later, Mrs. Berresford insisted on Hero's accompanying her to Redfern's. Charlie watched them depart with a feeling of guilty joy.

"The launch has her steam up," he said to Nettie rather diffidently. "May I take you for a short cruise? We could drop down to Yarmouth with the tide and be back before the others returned."

To his delight she consented, without embarrassment, and they steamed happily down with the tide.

Nettie was delightful, full of chatter and gay, as she only was when alone with him. They landed at quaint little Yarmouth and moored about there so forgetful of time, that they found it was after five o'clock when they at last started home again.

It was a very different thing steaming against the tide to dropping down with it, and they progressed very slowly. It began to grow dark and Charlie grew anxious, for the little launch carried no light, and they were right in the track of all the shipping. He told the launchman to stoke up as much as he dared and to keep the whistle going. A mist rose and it grew deadly cold. Nettie had only a thin frock on. Charlie took off his coat and wrapped it round her, and they crouched down behind a bit of tarpaulin to shelter from the shower of sparks which came from the funnel. She was white with fear. He put his arm round her and held her close to him, and he could feel her heart beating like a frightened bird's.

"Shall we ever find the yacht?" she asked.

"Oh yes," he said soothingly, "if we don't we have only got to steer for the lights of Cowes." He didn't tell her that he thought the boiler might burst, or that they might be run down at any moment.

She clung to him, trembling and silent, while he tried to reassure her, kissing her and murmuring fond and tender words.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she said; "you don't love me like that."

"I love you passionately," he answered, "and I want you to be my wife."

She gave a little cry of dismay and exclaimed in the words of the immortal Becky Sharp, and with the same poignant grief in her tones, "Oh, I am married already! I was married to Sir William Lennox, in the Registry Office at Cowes this morning, and I am to join him to-morrow."

A piercing whistle from the launch cut through, as with a knife, the silence that ensued, and at that instant the captain of "The Juliet" hearing it, burnt a blue flare light on the bows.

Right before them was the yacht, looming large and black, and there, above them, with her beautiful figure, in its white dress, shining against the darkness, stood lovely Hero, gazing anxiously out over the black waters, like her namesake of old, waiting for her lover.

A Romance of Modern London.

By CURTIS YORKE,

Author of "HUSH!" "THE MYSTERY OF BELGRAVE SQUARE," "THE BROWN PORTMANTEAU," "DUDLEY," "THE WILD RUTHVENS," "THAT LITTLE GIRL," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

"FOR THE LAST TIME!"

"If I should die to-night,
My friends would look upon my quiet face,
Before they laid it in its resting-place,
And deem that death had left it almost fair ;
And laying snow-white flowers against my hair,
Would smooth it down with tearful tenderness,
And fold my hands with lingering caress,
Poor hands, so empty and so cold to-night !

"If I should die to-night,
My friends would call to mind, with loving thought,
Some kindly deed the icy hand had wrought ;
Some gentle word the frozen lips had said ;
Errands on which the willing feet had sped ;
The memory of my selfishness and pride,
My hasty words, would all be put aside,
And so I should be loved and mourned to-night !"

As the days went on something of Fay's old fretfulness seemed to come back again. Perhaps there was some excuse for her. She was very weak—not with the delicious languor of convalescence, but with an exhausted debility and consequent depression which were painful and trying both to herself and those around her.

About the end of July Conrath took a pleasant house at Stockton-on-the-Sea. And the fresh sea breezes had an almost magical effect on the young mother. She was out nearly all day, for the weather was wonderfully settled and warm—and yet not too warm. The baby, too, grew daily plumper and less weird-looking.

At first Conrath had not, apparently, taken much interest in his small daughter. But now, when she did not cry so much, and was beginning, as her mother and nurse declared, to "take notice," it seemed to him possible that in time he might learn to love this soft tiny atom of humanity. He used to touch its fluffy hair and velvety cheeks with a curious wondering reverence. He felt his heart stir pleasantly when it smiled and cooed at him, as it often did, or clasped his finger in its small claw-like hand. He liked to speculate upon its future—as to when it would be able to walk, to go to school, to wear long frocks, and "come out"—perhaps be married. He wondered, too, if it would be a loving housewifely little creature such as Bee had been as a little girl—or if Fay's shrewd old-fashioned childhood would be reproduced in her daughter.

"How you do look at baby, Douglas," said Fay, one afternoon when she was feeling languid, and was resting on the sofa, the baby's cradle beside her.

"Do I?" he answered with a half smile. "Well—she's becoming rather an interesting little woman. I believe she knows me already."

Little Sadie, as if in acknowledgment of this compliment, cooed and crowed, and screwed her face in a series of dreadful contortions which made her father quail inwardly.

"Fay—do you suppose it's ill, or anything?" he said, bending down to look anxiously at his offspring. "It looks very *queer!*"

"Why, no, you foolish boy. She's only pleased."

"Oh," doubtfully. "She doesn't *look* very pleased, does she?"

Fay laughed a little.

"You don't deserve to have a baby," she said. "You don't know anything about them."

"Well, you don't know much, do you?" he answered somewhat absently.

He had risen, and was walking slowly up and down the room.

"What are you thinking of?" his wife asked presently.

"Nothing that would interest you, dear," he answered in a pre-occupied voice.

"But I want to know. You look so absorbed."

"Well—I was thinking out the outlines of an essay I have promised for one of the reviews," he answered.

Fay moved uneasily.

"You are always thinking of that kind of thing," she said somewhat petulantly.

He did not answer. He had paused near the open window, and stood looking out. The fragrant summer breeze, laden with a breath of the sea, stole in softly. Great clusters of pale yellow roses nodded sleepily in the sunshine. In the near distance one could hear the monotonous rise and fall of the waves on the shingle.

"You know I think it is such folly of you to slave away at your writing as you do," Fay went on in the plaintive voice Douglas knew so well.

"Yes—I know you do," he answered shortly.

"I'm sure I can't bring myself to take the slightest interest in anything you have written lately," she added with an impatient sigh.

"I know that too," he said. And his voice held a ring of bitterness.

"Your writing is far more to you than I am," she continued with quivering lips. "I am always second—only second."

"Oh Fay, for the love of God don't bring up that old grievance again!" he exclaimed sharply.

He had begun his restless walk again. Fay watched him with eyes half wistful, half impatient. His face was looking worn and old in the bright summer sunlight. He was thinner, too, than he had been, and his dark hair was plentifully sown with grey. All this Fay noticed discontentedly. She hated to see him look like that. It seemed as though he were unhappy. She did not want people to think he was unhappy. She did not want to think it herself.

"I *wish* you wouldn't walk up and down in that irritating way," she said at last. "It does make me feel so nervous."

He stopped and sat down beside her.

"I don't seem able to please you, Fay, do I?" he said wearily. But for answer she broke into one of her old fits of crying.

And then the same old things happened. He did his best to soothe and comfort her, and after a due time had elapsed, she permitted herself to be soothed and comforted. When the scene was over Douglas looked almost as white and agitated as she did. He had gone through this sort of thing so often—so often.

And he felt so desperately tired of it all. He leaned his head on his hand, with a heavy sigh. Fay tied her handkerchief nervously into knots. While their baby lay and smiled, and stretched out dreamily aimless little hands to the flowers and the breeze and the sunshine. At last it slept; and across its cradle the eyes of the father and mother met.

"Fay"—said Douglas, with a quiver in his deep voice, "are we going to have all the old miserable times over again?"

"Ah no," she sobbed. "I don't know what makes me so hateful—so different from the woman I want to be. I thought that perhaps when baby came things would be better."

"Yes—so did I," he answered sadly.

"Douglas—if I try to begin all over again—will you help me?—and try to love me?" she whispered, presently.

He stifled a sigh. This, too, he had heard so often.

"For baby's sake, Douglas," Fay went on in a trembling voice.

Now, Douglas had an affectionate nature. It was difficult for him to harden his heart against the pleadings of any woman. So now, when the mother of his child leaned her head penitently and sorrowfully against his breast, and stole one thin arm around his neck, he felt strangely moved and touched. The mother of his child! On some men these words act as a resistless spell. What remained, but for him to forgive her—as he had done so many times before? But a new rush of tenderness softened his eyes and shook his voice as he answered,

"My wife, we will help each other—and love each other." And thus over their child's slumbers a new peace was signed between them—a peace that was never again broken.

A few days later the baby was taken ill. It cried piteously night and day; and Fay insisted on sitting up with it, and devoting herself exclusively to its nursing—in spite of the remonstrances and advice of both Conrath himself and the doctor. But the child really was very ill, and seemed to lose strength with alarming rapidity.

One wild stormy night Fay sent down a frantic message to her husband to come to her at once. He hurried upstairs immediately and found her crouched on the hearthrug, her face like death, and her child clasped convulsively in her arms. The poor

little thing was moaning piteously, its eyes were rolled upward in a dreadful unseeing stare.

"My dearest Fay," entreated Conrath anxiously, "you will kill yourself if this goes on. Give the child to me."

But she did not heed him.

"Douglas—Douglas—she is dying. My baby is dying," she cried in an agony of grief. "See—look at her."

And indeed after a brief glance he changed countenance somewhat, and without speaking, went out of the room.

A few minutes later he came back again, carrying a glass of wine.

"Drink this," he said in an authoritative and yet tender voice. "And give baby to me. You are quite exhausted."

She obeyed him mechanically.

"I have sent for Dr. Grimes," he went on, gently raising her with his disengaged arm. "Now rest in this easy-chair for a little. I will take as good care of her as you could do."

And, strange to say, the child ceased its monotonous wailing cry, and seemed easier. For more than an hour Douglas walked up and down the room, carrying it in the firm gentle clasp that Bee had known and loved in her babyhood. And at last it seemed to doze, and Douglas sat down beside his wife, who was weeping silently but bitterly.

"Hush, my wife," he said in a low voice, laying his hand on hers. "I do not think our baby will die. But if it be the will of God to take her from us——"

He paused and his voice shook a little. For a strong protecting love had grown up in his heart for this little child—this part of himself. It would be hard to let her go.

The doctor came—and went. He could do little, but promised to come again in the morning.

The night wore on, and the grey dawn stole in. Husband and wife sat there still—his hand clasping hers, her head resting on his shoulder. She was weeping; but her tears were tears of thankfulness. For their baby was given back to them.

* * * * *

A few days later Conrath was summoned to the drawing-room to see a visitor—an old gentleman, who, it appeared, had given no name, but particularly desired to see Mr. Douglas Conrath.

As the latter entered the room he saw a man of perhaps seventy standing at the window, looking out. Who wheeled round at the closing of the door, and took a few steps into the middle of the room.

"God bless my soul! Your father's very image!" he exclaimed. Then he took out his pocket-handkerchief and used it violently.

Douglas looked at him with curiously mingled feelings. A swift intuition told him who his visitor was.

"Mr. Evan Conrath, I presume?" he said courteously but coldly.

"Yes, yes—that's my name. Your father's brother. I—er—well, my boy, I'm an old man, and you won't expect an old man to apologize to a young one. But—I want to make amends—if I can—for—for—" Here he broke down, and walked to the window again.

Douglas waited—silently.

Presently his uncle turned round.

"Then shall we be friends, my boy?" he said, holding out his hand.

The other took it, saying somewhat coldly,

"I am sorry that we should ever have been anything else."

For he could not but think of his dead mother, and what this reconciliation might have meant for her—had it come in time. It had come a matter of nearly twenty years too late—that was all. Most of the good things of this world come a few years late. Do you remember Lord Clyde's pathetic words when he received his well-earned honours? "Too late! Too late! *There is nobody left I care to tell it to!*"

Not a few of us are echoing them. The fame, the wealth, the position we toiled for so breathlessly through the long, weary, disappointing years, comes perhaps at last. We turn on the heights, and find ourselves alone—save for the swarm of mushroom friends whose business it is to dog success. But the dear old faces of our youth—the merry band who set out with us on life's race—where are they? It was at their feet we were to lay our laurels; it was on them we were to lavish our wealth; it was with them we were to share our seat in high places. It must be in some other world, then. For this world knows them no more. One by one they have left us. One by one they have folded their hands and lain down to sleep—the sleep that knows no

waking here. God grant we have taken time to love them—while we had them.

Old Evan Conrath was conscious of a curious tightening at his heart, as he looked at his brother's son. So like! And yet there was a stern gravity, a strength of will in this face that that other never had. How the old days rushed back on his memory—the dear old boyish days! Ah well—he was an old man now; and Charlie—Charlie was in his grave. And they had parted in bitter anger. His lips twitched nervously. Sitting down at the table, he hid his face in his hands and wept like a child.

After a moment's struggle with himself Douglas crossed the room and laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Uncle," he said unsteadily—"let the past go. Let us be friends."

The words were simple enough; but they meant a good deal. And they had been hard to say.

The two men had a long earnest talk after that—a talk that neither of them ever quite forgot. And the warm silent hand-clasp with which they parted was the earnest of a friendship that—for one of them, at least—lasted till the day of his death.

Old Conrath, it appeared, was staying at Stockton-on-the-Sea. His wife was delicate, and had been ordered sea air. The two households speedily became very friendly. Mrs. Conrath took rather a fancy to Fay, and the childless old couple raved mutually over the baby. Its great-uncle made it all sorts of presents, whose wild extravagance was only equalled by their utter uselessness. He lamented its sex, however, and confided the hope to his wife that it might grow up handsomer than its mother. Adding also that he thought a clever fellow like Douglas might have shown better taste in wives—as far as looks went.

But to her husband Fay had never seemed so lovable as at this time. She always met him with a smile now. The fretfulness that had so tortured him in her, seemed entirely gone. She studied his moods as she had never done before. She even read up all sorts of dry subjects in order to be more of a companion to him. This touched him very much. For his part he got into the way of talking over his ambitions and his aspirations with her, aye—and his business affairs as well—in a way in which he would once have thought impossible. These summer days were perhaps the happiest he had ever known.

Had he got over his love for Bee, then? No—he had not got over it. His was a faithful nature; and she would always be the "one woman" to him. But he no longer sickened for the possession of her. Why? I cannot tell you why. Suffering had strengthened his higher nature, perhaps. I don't know. Or perhaps it had subdued his lower nature. There comes a time in a man's life when he either dominates his passions, or his passions dominate him. This time had come to Douglas. And the memory of a night when his broken unaccustomed prayers had silently mingled with those of the woman he loved, and who loved him, was strong upon him still.

So the days went on and September was half over. Douglas fancied that Fay was looking pale and thin. He insisted on her seeing the doctor, who laughed fatly at his fears.

"Oh, you young husbands—you young husbands!" he said. "What fidgets you are. Mrs. Conrath is all right—or would be—if she would give up nursing that baby, as I have told her over and over again."

And this, by Douglas's command, was done. Nevertheless, Fay remained pale and thin, as before. Her husband felt anxious about her. She had a kind of transparent look that he did not like.

One night they were sitting together in the verandah. He was going down to Cornwall the next day, on some unavoidable business connected with the mine. Somehow, he felt curiously reluctant to go. Fay, too, clung to him as if they might never meet again.

"Must you go?" she whispered.

"I must, dear. But I shall only be away three or four days. Why, little woman, you will hardly have time to miss me."

She shivered, but said nothing. He noticed anew how white and fragile she looked, and there was a keen anxiety in his voice as he said,

"You are not feeling ill, dear, are you? You look such a ghost of a little girl to-night."

"Oh no," she answered, smiling as she leaned her head against him. "But I feel so tired—always so tired."

Next morning Fay drove to the station with him, and the last thing he saw was her pale plain little face with its great wistful eyes—smiling good-bye to him.

The day seemed very long to Fay. She missed Douglas terribly. Besides she was not feeling well. She went to bed early; for she was tired, and her throat was very sore. In the morning it was worse, and on the third day it was worse still. Old Mrs. Conrath, who came in in the afternoon, dispatched a servant at once for the doctor. Who pronounced it diphtheria of the most malignant type. Young Mrs. Conrath was in a very alarming state, he said. Her husband must be wired for at once.

Meanwhile Fay grew weaker and weaker. She had no strength to resist the disease—which made its usual steady wasting progress. When it abated came the last, the fatal stage of utter prostration.

“Will Douglas come?” she whispered once during the night to old Mrs. Conrath, who would not leave her. “Does he know? Can he get here in time?” Then she added, “They had better not bring—baby.”

Another day passed. Douglas had wired in the forenoon that he would come by the night mail. There had been some delay in his getting the doctor’s telegram.

And now it was night. Fay was sinking—sinking.

“She can’t last another hour, I fear,” said the doctor briefly.

Fay heard him, and opened her eyes.

“I shall wait—for my husband,” she murmured with a curious quivering smile.

The night was very still. They could hear the waves on the beach, the gentle sighing of the light wind as it touched the trees.

But hark! Far away, the whistle of the approaching train cut through the stillness. Nearer—nearer. Fay heard it too.

“A quarter of an hour,” she whispered as if to herself. “He will come—in a quarter of an hour.”

Ten minutes passed. Presently the dying girl spoke again, quite eagerly. Her voice seemed stronger.

“My hair”—she said, turning her eyes on old Mrs. Conrath who sat weeping. “Is it very untidy? Smooth it a little, please. And—that little pink shawl—put it round my shoulders. He always said that pink—became me.”

That was done; and all was still again.

“Ah, Douglas, my dear, be quick, be quick,” gasped the faint little voice that now had a throb of tears in it.

The dull sound of horses' furiously galloping feet cleft the silence outside. Louder—louder—nearer. Will he be in time? God grant it.

The horses swept up the drive, and stopped sharply at the hall door.

In an incredibly short time Douglas was in the room, and kneeling at the bedside—holding his dying wife in his arms.

"Thank God—you came—in time," she murmured. "Kiss me—darling husband. Kiss me—good-bye."

And as his lips met hers, she died.

* * * * *

So Fay lay in her coffin. Flowers on her breast and in her hands, and in the soft almost living fluffiness of her hair.

Douglas spent many bitter hours in that silent darkened room. For is there any grief so bitter as the grief of remorse? When we remember, in a heart-wrung kind of way, the pleadings for love that we answered coldly—the wistful looks we disregarded—the loving heart, now cold, that we knowingly starved, even if we restrained from trampling upon it. We may kiss the dead lips—they will not smile, nor answer. We may murmur passionate words of tardy love and regret to the dead ears—they will not hear. Only silence answers us—the chill, awful, hopeless silence of the dead.

Towards the afternoon of the day before the funeral, a card was brought to Douglas. It was Ralph Debenham's. He went to him at once, with a curious sense of relief in his presence. The two men shook hands in silence. Douglas was struck by Debenham's ghastly pallor, and the strange look in his eyes.

"Debenham, what is it? Are you ill?" he said involuntarily.

"No," said the other in a hollow voice. Then, seemingly with an effort he went on, "Conrath—may I—see her?"

For answer Douglas silently led the way upstairs—to that quiet room. In silence yet, they stood looking down at the dead still face. Douglas's lips were quivering, his lashes were heavy with unshed tears. But Debenham's features seemed carved in stone. He stood with folded arms and heaving chest—the misery in his eyes seeming to say that he alone had the right to mourn for her. Then all at once, with a hoarse cry, he buried his face in his hands—his whole frame shaken by convulsive tearless sobs.

A flash of comprehension swept over Conrath's soul, and held him dumb. He remembered a moonlight night in Cornwall, a few broken words, a silence.

Presently Debenham recovered himself and walked to the window. When he turned to the room again he was pale and collected. He laid his hand on Douglas's shoulder, and said almost inaudibly,

"My boy—forgive me. I ought to have told you, perhaps—long ago. But—it was difficult."

The eyes of the two men met. They understood each other. After a minute Debenham said huskily,
"Will you let me—kiss her?"
"Surely."

Thus for the first and last time Ralph Debenham kissed the woman he loved. Who neither resented his kiss, nor kissed him back again.

* * * * *

As Lady Dinwoodie was abroad when her daughter's death took place, and as she could not by any possibility arrive in England in time for the funeral, she decided on remaining abroad for some time longer. So Douglas, at old Mrs. Conrath's earnest entreaty, left his baby-daughter in her care, and prepared to obey his doctor's orders, and go away somewhere for a thorough change.

But he could not go without a few farewell words to Bee. They met calmly, almost coldly. For to Douglas, Bee's fair face was almost like a reproach. And to Bee, Douglas's sorrow was sacred. She half forgot her passionate heart's-love for him as he bade her farewell to-day, in his deep mourning and with his face sharpened and haggard with the grief that was half remorse, and half the wrench from *the accustomed*, that we all know so well.

"Ah, Douglas," she said weeping, "I cannot believe it. It seems so sad—so dearly sad. Surely in all the world there is nothing so sad as death."

"Except life," he answered almost sternly.

It was impossible, *then*, that he should think of his love for her, while his remorseful heart was half in his dead wife's grave. He took her hands loosely in both his.

"Good-bye," he said, in scarcely more than a whisper. "Some curious intuition tells me that we shall never meet again."

She turned pale. For the same intuition held her too.

"Good-bye, Douglas," she breathed, almost inaudibly. "Good-bye."

He pressed her hands—then let them go. There was a moment's silence; and he was gone.

Bee did not cry. She had not cried for a long time now. A strange gnawing pain held her heart—a pain that never lifted. Even in sleep it hovered over her, to seize the first moment of waking. She felt that her parting with Douglas had been final. He had not said, as Cyril had done, that she was to send for him if she wanted him. But then—Cyril loved her.

And the days went on. A thousand little unimportant duties had to be done. Bee did them well and carefully.

Thus nearly a year passed, and still Douglas did not come home.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE LIGHTS OF LONDON!"

"O cruel lamps of London, if tears your light could drown,
Your victims' eyes would weep them, O Lights of London Town."

GEORGE R. SIMS.

"Ay, you had much to offer: wealth enough
To gild the future; and a path of ease
For one whose way is somewhat dark and rough;
New friends;—a life as calm as summer seas!
And something (was it love?) to keep us true,
And make us precious in each other's sight.
Ah, then indeed my heart's resolve I knew
Last night, last night!"

SARAH DOUDNEY.

MRS. CHANDELIER was dead. No particular sorrow stirred Bee's heart, for of late her grandmother had only embodied a very difficult duty. But she felt curiously desolate. For she was quite alone in the world. To no one did it matter one straw if she lived or died, she thought drearily. Nobody wanted her; nobody needed her. Her duty seemed nowhere. And to loving natures this is a bleak vista, whose horizon means despair. As

for Sir Cyril and Douglas, they seemed to have dropped out of her life completely. Of course in Sir Cyril's case, that was only to be expected, she told herself; but surely Douglas might have written to her, might have shown some desire to know if she were well or ill, living or dead. His little sister, he had called her. Ah well, his memory was no longer than other people's, apparently. And Bee's thoughts became bitter, as thoughts are apt to be when their owners are poor and friendless.

When all things were settled, and the few articles of furniture which the landlord did not claim for the rent had been sold, Bee found herself possessed of about twenty pounds. Her worldly wealth! Once she would have thought it hardly the price of a ball-gown. But now it seemed to her a good deal. It would serve her until she got "something to do." Something to do! How easy it sounds in the uttering. How heart-sickening in the finding. But Bee did not know this. She was young, and hopeful, and ambitious. In London—in wide busy London—there must be work for one energetic little woman. Ah, Bee, my dear, my dear—God help you!

She took a small room in a quiet street in the neighbourhood of Fulham and became a frequenter of registry offices. Daily she studied the advertisements in the *Standard*. Many were alluring to her inexperienced eye. For instance:

"Wanted—a young person to superintend the studies of four small children. Most refined and comfortable home. Apply at 750, Cromwell Road."

Bee applied at 750, Cromwell Road, and to the tall footman who opened the door she gave her name as Miss Somers. Having waited in a species of ante-room for upwards of twenty minutes, she was at last informed that Mrs. Calverley would see her. An austere, black-eyed, doubly black-browed woman was Mrs. Calverley. Bee quailed as she encountered her gaze.

"You are very young, Miss Somers," observed Mrs. Calverley, after a prolonged silent survey of Bee's personality.

"I look much younger than I am," the girl hastened to say, "I am twenty-two."

Whereupon followed such a severe fire of cross-examination that Bee felt absolutely giddy.

"My children are high-spirited," resumed Mrs. Calverley after pausing to take breath, "and I am thankful to say possess ex-

uberant health. They require constant supervision and attention. You would have entire charge of them. You would of course keep their clothes in order, and I should expect you to make the dresses of the two younger girls, who, by the way, would share your sleeping-apartment."

"I hoped that perhaps I might have had a room to myself," faltered Bee.

"I am sorry I cannot alter my arrangements to suit your convenience, Miss Somers," was the cold answer.

"And the salary?" ventured the girl, after a brief pause.

"The salary," echoed Mrs. Calverley. "Surely you understood that I expect you to give your services in return for a comfortable and refined home?"

The colour rushed to Bee's face.

"I am afraid we should not suit each other," she said steadily. "I could not come to you on these terms."

"Very good," answered Mrs. Calverley with a stiff bow. "Allow me to wish you good-morning."

Two minutes later Bee was walking away from the house very fast indeed, her small mouth compressed, and her umbrella grasped almost vindictively. She felt it would have been impossible to share Mrs. Calverley's "comfortable and refined home." The woman inspired her with actual repulsion.

All very well, my little Bee, but "beggars must not be choosers." That sad knowledge will come to you later.

Her next experience—some days afterwards—was in a large gloomy mansion in Bayswater. This time her interviewer was a man—tall, solemn, bald-headed.

"You are a Christian, I trust, Miss Somers?" he said, when a few preliminaries had been gone into.

"I hope so," Bee answered.

"You *hope* so, my dear young friend? You only hope so? But I cannot confide the morals of my innocent little ones to a preceptress who only hopes she is one of the Lord's people."

Bee looked out of the window.

"In that case," went on Mr. Sodeley, transfixing her with his fishy eyes, "I fear, I regret to say I fear, that I cannot entertain the thought of engaging you. This is a Christian household, Miss Somers. Our minds are sullied by no doubts here. We do not hope—we know."

And Mr. Sodeley cast his eyes upwards to the wanton little cherubs which adorned the ceiling.

He then shook his head mournfully and rang the bell.

Bee was beginning to feel rather down-hearted. A cold bitter wind met her as she walked slowly westward. It had begun to rain too, a fine drizzling rain that promised to become a steady downpour. The shabby room which was all she could call home now, looked more than ordinarily cheerless and dreary on this damp chilly December afternoon, and Bee felt strongly inclined to sit down and cry. But a vague sense that most of her life must now be comparatively cheerless and dreary—that if she cried now she might as well be always crying—gave her a curious negative kind of bravery.

She took off her hat and jacket, and sat down at the window. In the room below some one was “whipping the piano” in a weird clanging waltz. Bee’s sad thoughts twined themselves in and out of the catching rhythm. What a difference—what a hard cruel difference!—a few short months had made in her life. She seemed no longer to have even the semblance of the personality of the old, light-hearted Bee. She was Katherine Somers now. Sometimes she felt as if she had no real name at all. Just now, she felt as if it would have been better if Douglas’s father had let her die in her babyhood on that snowy night so long ago. But her healthy young soul rose in revolt at this last thought.

“No,” she said half aloud in her earnestness. “God sent me into the world. He must have something for me to do with my life. I can’t see just now what it is. But I shall see. And until I do I shall just stoically and patiently do what dear old Carlyle calls the duty that lies nearest.”

Ah, brave little Bee! You are only setting out on life’s journey. To youth and health, and hope, all things seem possible.

But youth rarely takes into consideration the possibility of illness. And it so happened that Bee caught cold on that wet afternoon, and a severe attack of inflammation seized her and kept her in her bed for some weeks. Medicines and doctors’ visits make awful inroads in slender finances, and as the weeks went on Bee’s twenty pounds diminished sadly. By the time she was able to sit up and be dressed, she had hardly sufficient to

pay her landlady and her doctor's bill. A week or two later she had to ask the former to "wait." And landladies are not fond of waiting.

As the days went on a sleepless horror haunted our little Bee. Was she going to be turned out into the street, as Mrs. Short had grimly hinted? What was she to do? She seemed to have come to a blank wall in her young life. Once, in her despair, she thought of writing to Douglas. But the very consciousness of her love for him, combined with his apparent forgetfulness of her very existence, made it impossible that she should break the silence he had voluntarily placed between them. She could not write to Cyril. She felt that she had treated him too badly. If he had only known—if he could have come to her then—I think she would have been less hard-hearted. Surely life with Cyril would be preferable to death on the streets, or in the workhouse. As for her female friends, they had never been numerous. Fay had been her dearest friend. And Fay—was dead.

One day when Bee was strong enough to go about almost as usual, Mrs. Short told her that her room was let, and would she please to move out on the following afternoon. Bee never forgot that awful day, and the sleepless night that followed it. Towards morning a resolution came to her. She made up her mind to consult a certain well-known clergyman, whom I shall call Dr. Canns. She had known him slightly in the old days in Portland Place. Perhaps he would remember her. Perhaps he might know of some situation. She set off early and found him at home and disengaged. He remembered her quite well, and listened attentively to her sad little story. When it was ended he sat for some time without speaking, his kind old face very grave.

"We must think," he said at last—"we must think what can be done. It is a terrible position for a young creature like you to be placed in. And in the meantime I'm afraid I don't know of any—er—post that you would be quite fitted for. In the first place you will allow me to make you a small loan. You can repay me later, you know. Yes, yes, it's all right, I know, I know. Dear me, dear me, I have daughters of my own. There, there, don't cry, my poor child, don't cry. But of course you are weak from your recent illness. Have you looked in the paper this morning? No? Well, let us look now."

As he spoke he took up the advertisement sheet of that day's *Times*, and after hastily running his eye over its columns, cut out two advertisements.

Both seemed singularly suitable, Bee thought—as advertisements have an illusive way of seeming. In the first an old lady wanted a healthy intelligent young lady as companion and amanuensis. In the second a widower desired a nursery-governess for his three young children.

"Perhaps you may succeed in getting one of these," Dr. Canns said, after perusing both carefully once more with his short-sighted blue eyes. "And you can refer to me, you know, you can refer to me. And don't let yourself get down-hearted if you have to wait a little longer. We all have our troubles, my dear. And you may always count upon me as a friend, you know, as a friend." And the good old man went with her to the very door.

Bee could not speak her thanks. But I think he understood.

Mrs. Short's pecuniary claims being satisfied, Bee was allowed to retain her room, and the next morning she took her way to a handsome house in Kensington Gore, where the old lady desirous of a young companion was to be seen between the hours of eleven and twelve. She felt confident she could give satisfaction here. For was she not experienced in the ways of old ladies?

To her disappointment, however, she found that this special old lady had already engaged a suitable companion. So she had her walk for nothing.

Now for the widower—who, Bee found on consulting the advertisement, was to be applied to in the first instance, by letter. She had overlooked this fact; so she wended her way home again, and wrote a curt little note, in her very best hand—directing it to "R. T." at a certain number in Curzon Street. By the next night's post she received the following note in reply :

"MADAM,

"I shall be glad if you will call at above address to-morrow afternoon at any time between four and six which may be convenient to you.

"Yours truly,

"REGINALD M. C. TREHERNE.

"To Miss Katherine Somers."

Now, terse as it was, Bee liked this note. It was written in a firm manly hand, with very black ink on very thick paper. Bee fancied the writer would be kind.

The following afternoon, about half-past four, found her walking quickly along Curzon Street, nervously anxious lest this post too should be filled up before she got there.

I am bound to say that she was not looking her best to-day. The sharp February wind had reddened her nose and her eyelids. She had a bad cold too, which was as unbecoming as colds usually are—in real life.

Here again you will observe Bee's utter unfitness for a story-book heroine. She ought to have looked only pale enough to be interesting; her eyes should have had dark but becoming shadows underneath them, etc. etc. As it was, however, she simply looked a very cold, and tired, and not very pretty young woman.

Upon asking for Mr. Treherne, she was told he was from home, but that Mrs. Enderton would see her. Privately wondering who Mrs. Enderton might be, she was ushered into a large, luxuriously furnished drawing-room, at once warmed and lit, on this dark February afternoon, by a cosily-blazing fire. A kindly looking old lady, with a sweet but careworn face, advanced to meet her.

"Miss Somers, is it not?" she said in a pleasant but somewhat tired voice. "I am a little deaf. I did not quite catch the name."

Bee bowed affirmatively.

"Sit down," went on the old lady. "My nephew, Mr. Treherne, has been suddenly called out of town, and may not return for a week or so. So he has deputed me to see you instead of him. He has had a great deal of trouble with his governesses. And this time I should think he has had over five hundred applications. But he liked your letter better than any of the others, and if all things are satisfactory, wishes me to engage you. The salary is fifty pounds a year. You have references of course?"

Bee named Dr. Canns.

"Ah yes, a most worthy man. The only thing is, Miss Somers, we thought you would have been much older. Indeed from your letter we imagined you quite elderly. Have you had much experience with children?"

Bee with trembling lips confessed her utter want of experience.

"But I am very fond of children," she went on falteringly. "And I thought, that perhaps, if they were very young, I might be able to teach them all that was required for a year or two. I could go on studying myself, you know."

Mrs. Enderton was soft-hearted, and the wistfulness of the girl's look and tone touched her.

"Another thing," went on Bee in a low voice. "I think I ought to tell you that my real name is not Somers, but Adeane. But I prefer to be known by the former name, because—because I used to know a good many people in London before—I mean—when I was better off. Dr. Canns knows. I told him. And he thought there would be no harm."

"Ah, silly pride, my dear, silly pride," said the old lady reprovingly. "However, no doubt we all have our pride. Yes, yes. Well—I shall write to my nephew and Dr. Canns to-night. I really think you would be very suitable. Of course, it is a disadvantage, your being young and inexperienced. But, after all, perhaps it is better that the children should have some one young about them. And the experience is not essential. And—you will pardon me, my dear—but you are not objectionably pretty, and I am sure not flighty in any way. The life I have had with my nephew's governesses—for I keep house for him—has almost worn me to a shadow. By the way, you look pale and thin. You are not delicate, are you? No? That is right. The last governess we had was laid up continually with one thing or another. Well, good afternoon. You shall hear from either my nephew or myself in the course of a day or two."

Bee went slowly downstairs. The stove in the hall was burning cheerily. Great hot-house plants stood about, filling the air with perfume. The distant sound of children's merry laughter rang pleasantly in the lonely girl's ears. An indescribable air of peace, of comfort, of home, seemed to pervade everything. Bee's heart sank, though. This quiet haven would not be for her, whispered conviction. It was—as we have all said in our childhood, and in finer phrase in our manhood and womanhood—"too good to be true."

Nevertheless, whether good or not, it was true. For, nearly a week later, she received a letter from Mrs. Enderton, engaging

her as nursery-governess to Mr. Treherne's children, and requesting her to begin her duties on the following Thursday.

Accordingly, on Thursday afternoon, in a shabby mud-stained four-wheeler, Bee and her one box arrived at her destination.

Mrs. Enderton was out, but would return shortly, said the elderly housemaid who showed her to her room. Bee took off her things, and surveyed her new domain. It was a small room, but cheerily furnished with gay chintz and light furniture. Like the rest of the house it looked homelike. By the time she had unpacked and arranged most of her belongings, a summons came for her to go to the schoolroom. She felt rather nervous at the idea of meeting her pupils. Their father she never thought of. Possibly she would see him but rarely. To her delight she found Mrs. Enderton in the schoolroom. A pale, pretty little girl of eight was sitting on the hearthrug, dressing a wax doll. A dark-eyed boy of six was teasing a fat little girl of perhaps half his age. It was a cheerful room, with a blazing fire, and a well-set-out tea-table. When Bee had greeted Mrs. Enderton, the eldest girl, in obedience to a sign from the latter, rose, laid down her doll, and said demurely,

"How do you do, Miss Somers?"

The boy declined to make any overtures; but the fat little girl ran across to where Bee was sitting, climbed upon her knee, and threw her arms round her neck.

"Ethel always makes friends with everybody," said the elder girl, with an old-fashioned drawing in of her pretty lips.

"But I hope you are going to make friends with me too," said Bee gently.

"Lionel and I will wait until to-morrow," was the disconcerting answer. "Some governesses are very nice the first day, and very nasty afterwards."

"Winifred, you talk too much," said Mrs. Enderton reprovingly. "Go back to your doll. I want to talk to Miss Somers."

After a quarter of an hour or so of pleasant converse, the old lady said briskly,

"And now I am sure you must want your tea. Don't let the children take advantage of you. I shall see you to-morrow." And with a pleasant nod, she rustled away.

During tea-time the children became more communicative. Winifred graciously allowed that Bee had quite a nice little face,

and didn't *look* as if she could be cross. Lionel pronounced her "jolly" because she did not scold him when he spilled his tea. And little Ethel put her tiny hand into Bee's and whispered that she loved her.

The young governess went to bed that night with a heart full of passionate thankfulness. She was sure she and the children would mutually love each other. She was sure she could do her duty by them. And how kind and friendly Mrs. Enderton had been!

She slept soundly, with only one brief dream. But it was a sad one. She dreamt that she was sailing on a stormy sea in a little cockle-shell of a boat. And on the angry waters in its wake floated a white, dead face. It was Douglas's face ; and Bee woke with a sharp terrified cry.

Her prayers that morning were incoherent, and broken by bitter weeping.

"Have you been crying, Miss Somers ?" asked Winifred, in the clear incisive treble of childhood, as they sat at breakfast in the sunny schoolroom. "Why have you? Auntie Enderton says crying doesn't do any good. Besides—you're too old to cry, aren't you?"

"Too old to cry," echoed fat little Ethel gravely.

"Pooh! she isn't too old!" observed Lionel, with superior wisdom and a mouth full of bread and milk. "She isn't as old as father, and nurse said he cried when mother died."

"Yes, but Auntie Enderton said we must on *no* account speak to father about it," said Winifred impressively—"nor to *any* one."

"Mustn't *peak* about it!" added Ethel the echo.

But by this time breakfast was at an end, and Mrs. Enderton came in. She greeted Bee kindly, gave her a brief sketch of her duties for the day, and hurried away again. To Bee these duties appeared almost improbably light. She was simply to be the children's companion, it seemed, to amuse them, to go out walking with them, and to infuse into Winifred's active brain such learning as was suitable to her years. Light lessons were also to be administered to Lionel.

Certainly her lines had fallen in pleasant places.

One afternoon about dusk—nearly a week later—when a merry game of "hunt the thimble" was in progress in the schoolroom,

the door opened, and a tall masculine figure paused on the threshold.

"Oh—it's father," said Winifred, going towards the newcomer.

Bee felt uncomfortably conscious of flushed cheeks and dishevelled hair.

Mr. Treherne bestowed a grave kiss upon his little daughter, patted the heads of the two younger children, and advancing towards Bee, said in a deep strong voice,

"How do you do, Miss Somers?"

At the same time he held out his hand, and took hers in a grasp both firm and kindly, inspecting her keenly the while with a pair of deep-set, rather stern-looking eyes.

He looked years younger than Bee had imagined him to be. Certainly several years on the right side of forty. His face was somewhat pale in complexion, refined, and well-featured. There was a rigid austerity about the modelling of the mouth, chin, and jaw, however, which was unpleasing, and almost repellent. Bee found herself unconsciously pitying the dead Mrs. Treherne.

The children seemed rather in awe of their father. Even the loving little Ethel kept close to Bee, and offered no demonstration of affection.

"You find the little ones tractable, I hope?" Mr. Treherne said, after some desultory conversation.

The children were all that could be desired, Bee answered, with a bright downward smile at her little charges.

"My aunt has doubtless told you of my wishes regarding them?" he went on.

Bee replied that Mrs. Enderton had fully explained her duties.

"That is well," was the curt answer.

Mr. Treherne's voice and manner were somewhat cold and abrupt—more so than was altogether pleasant, Bee decided. But as the firelight flashed upon his face, she saw that the stern expression in his eyes was more like sadness. Perhaps his voice could soften too.

He did not stay very long, and Bee felt rather relieved as the door closed behind him.

So the weeks glided on, and "the new governess" became quite domesticated in Reginald Treherne's household. The children adored her; Mrs. Enderton seemed pleased with her.

And Mr. Treherne? Well, he took very little notice of her. She always went down to the drawing-room—by Mrs. Enderton's express wish—upon such evenings as that lady was at home and alone. Mrs. Enderton was very fond of music; so Bee often played and sang to her. Sometimes she assisted the old lady in the endless intricate fancy-work which invariably appeared on these evenings. Sometimes they only talked. Mr. Treherne never joined them. It was his habit to sit in lonely state in his study from dinner-time till bed-time—when no social duties claimed him. To Bee, his life seemed a lonely and an empty one.

It was a surprise, therefore, both to his aunt and his governess, when he appeared one June night in the drawing-room, and seated himself in a chair at an open window, with an evident air of having "come to stay." Bee was singing when he entered, and he desired her—somewhat peremptorily—to go on singing. He was her employer; and she obeyed. He remained for about an hour, asking for one song after another. Then, without remark of any kind, he quitted the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

But after that night he made a point of spending an hour, more or less, in the drawing-room every evening. Once he asked Bee if she played chess, and finding that she did, and that she was no mean foe, challenged her almost nightly.

The months fled swiftly. One day Bee discovered to her surprise that she had been nearly two years in Curzon Street. Except in the evenings she saw but little of her employer. He rarely appeared at meals, and grew daily more taciturn and unapproachable. He was both fond and proud of his children, Bee discovered; though, from his usual demeanour towards them, few could have guessed as much. They were afraid of him, as I have hinted. He was nothing in their young lives. And he felt this keenly.

One thing that grieved Bee specially was that she was not allowed to impart any religious instruction to her pupils. Mr. Treherne, it appeared, held peculiar views, and desired that his children's minds should be left unbiassed until they arrived at years of discretion.

On a dark afternoon in November Bee was surprised by receiving a message from Treherne that he would like to see her in

his study. She went at once, and found him seated at the table, which was inundated with books and papers. He looked ill, and was leaning his head on his hand.

"I want you to copy some papers for me, Miss Somers," he said, rising as she entered. "They must be sent off by this evening's post; and I have such an overpowering headache, I can hardly see. You write a good and rapid hand—so perhaps you will oblige me."

Of course Bee acquiesced, and Treherne, having told her what she was to do, and placed near her all she could want, left her.

In an hour, or thereabouts, her task was finished, and with a little yawn, she rose, and took a leisurely survey of the book-shelves. They were well filled with a somewhat heterogeneous supply of literature—principally of the heavy philosophical type, and in various languages. She ran her eye over the volumes nearest her. Huxley, Tyndall, Kant, Hegel, Richter, Schopenhauer, Plato, Herbert Spencer. And, sandwiched between the two last, a few volumes of Robert Browning, and Dante's "Inferno." A goodly mixture! Bee took down Richter's delicious "Flower and Thorn Pieces," and became absorbed. She hardly heard the door open, and Treherne come in. At the sound of his voice she started up, and laid down her book in some confusion.

"I have finished the writing you gave me to do," she said hurriedly.

He smiled. His face looked quite different when he smiled. Then he sat down and read over carefully what she had written.

When perhaps a quarter of an hour had passed, he looked up and said quietly,

"Thank you. You are all that could be desired as a secretary."

"I hope you are feeling better?" she ventured in a timid voice. For she had never quite got over her awe of him.

"Thank you—yes." Then touching her book he added, "What were you reading? Ah, Richter. Is he a favourite of yours?"

"Yes," she answered briefly enough.

"Then will you accept this copy of 'Flower and Thorn Pieces?' I shall be very pleased if you will."

"Oh thank you," returned Bee in pleased surprise. "Thank you very much."

They had quite a pleasant talk after that, at the end of which Bee, remembering the children's tea-time, hastened away.

It was not the last time, by a good many, that she acted as Treherne's secretary; and in these *tête-à-tête* interviews she grew to respect him very thoroughly, and like him very sincerely.

Yes, it was a happy peaceful home she had found. But—she knew it could not last. Soon—too soon—the children would be beyond her teaching. And then she would be adrift once more. A shuddering dread of being again a homeless waif used to come over her like a nightmare. It would be harder, too, after knowing this quiet home, fenced in from all immediate care and anxiety.

These thoughts pressed on her more heavily than usual one night as she sat at her bedroom window, looking out on London's myriad twinkling lights—the lights that have lured so many hopeful hearts to ruin and despair, and have been to others the lights that showed the way to worldly success and glory.

She had been thinking of Douglas, too—thinking of him in the bitterly hurt kind of way in which we think of loved ones who have shown us that they can do without us, that we are nothing in their lives.

Where was he? What was he doing? Was he well? Was he ill? Did he never think of her at all now?—of his little sister Bee?

Just then there was a tap at the door. Mrs. Enderton wanted her in the drawing-room.

"My dear," said that lady, who was dozing over a crewel-work peacock when Bee got downstairs, "my nephew wants you to assist him with some writing. You will find him in his study."

Bee went, and for an hour or more wrote diligently to dictation. But her thoughts were far away.

Suddenly Treherne took the pen from her hand.

"What is the matter?" he said, in a voice so gentle she hardly recognized it. "Your hands are trembling. Your eyes are full of tears."

As both these accusations were undeniably true, Bee wisely made no attempt to refute them.

"What is it?" he said again, his eyes softening with a deep concern. "Do you feel ill?"

"No—oh no," she stammered. "But—but I believe I am tired."

"Then you shall not write any more to-night," he said decidedly. "You do look tired—and pale. And—forgive me!—unhappy."

Then after a second or two he added almost tenderly, "Is anything troubling you? Can I be of any use?"

But Bee, with an unsteady good-night, fled away upstairs. There are times when hard words are more easily borne than gentle ones—when human sympathy is the one thing that sends us over the boundary of self-repression.

Treherne walked up and down his study for a long time after Bee had left him. He was deciding a somewhat weighty question. There was much to be said for and against, it appeared.

When at last he threw himself into his chair, his face had a white, determined expression. He had made his decision.

The next day was wet. The children's daily walk had been forbidden in consequence, and they were unusually troublesome. As far as Winifred and Lionel were concerned, they appeared to have got out of bed on that side which is popularly known as the "wrong" one. They quarrelled incessantly, and at last Winifred subsided into a melancholy continuous wail, which was heartlessly ridiculed by her brother, and made her governess long to shake her.

Bee too was feeling cross and out of sorts. It was one of these dull depressing days when one inclines to think with Theocritus that "it is best not to be born; but—being born—the next best thing is to die as soon as possible."

However, the day wore itself away—as days will, whether dull or lively. When the children had gone to bed, Bee seated herself in a big chair by the fire with a long sigh of relief, and some piece of necessary sewing. She was not wanted in the drawing-room to-night, for Mrs. Enderton had gone out to dinner.

The girl looked very fair and sweet as she sat there in the lamp-light. But she looked sad, too. The old grief of being necessary to no one weighed upon her—

The door opened suddenly, but gently, and to her extreme surprise Treherne came in.

"Have I disturbed you?" he said with the slow rare smile that changed his face so wonderfully.

"Oh no," she answered. "I was only sewing—and thinking." She sighed involuntarily as she spoke.

"You must have been thinking very deeply," he said. "I knocked twice, but you did not hear me."

"No," she replied absently, "I did not hear you."

There was a somewhat lengthy pause. Treherne was leaning against the mantelpiece, fingering, abstractedly and unseeingly, some little ornament thereon. Something had evidently shaken him from his ordinary self-possession. He looked paler than usual, and almost nervous.

Bee went on with her sewing, wondering privately why he had come. He must have known the children would be in bed. He seemed to divine her thoughts, for presently he said in his most abrupt tone,

"You are wondering why I have come here to-night—are you not?"

"Yes"—admitted Bee truthfully—"I was wondering—a little."

He walked once the length of the room and back again. Then he drew a chair to the table and sat down.

"Put aside your sewing, please," he said, with an impatient, almost irritable gesture. "I want to speak to you."

She obeyed, folded her little hands on her lap, and waited.

"Yes?" she said interrogatively, when a minute had gone by in silence.

"I think—that perhaps you must know what it is I have to say to you," he replied slowly.

A startled look came into her eyes.

"Is it"—she faltered—"is it that you no longer want me—to be governess to your children? Is that what you mean?"

A half smile unbent his stern lips.

"In a way—yes," he answered—"that is what I mean."

Bee was silent. For her lips were trembling sadly. Treherne was silent too.

"I am very sorry," murmured the girl at last. And to her confusion she felt that her eyes were full of tears.

She rose as she spoke; and he rose too.

"Don't you understand?" he said, speaking in a low unsteady voice, and taking one of her hands gently in his. "Don't you know what I want?"

Bee looked up in supreme astonishment. He was very white, and seemed terribly agitated. But his eyes held an almost imploring tenderness.

"Can you care for me?" he continued almost in a whisper, bending his head very near to hers. "Will you be my wife? I love you very dearly—so dearly that I am sure I could make you happy."

For quite a minute Bee preserved a petrified silence.

Marry Mr. Treherne! The idea was as new as it was unpleasant. A dreadful and unaccountable desire to laugh—born of nervousness, probably—took possession of her. Happily she strangled it in its birth.

"My dear—have I startled you?" Treherne went on, drawing her nearer to him by the hand he still held. "But surely you must have known—must have guessed—"

"I did not—I did not indeed!" she exclaimed earnestly. "I never thought of such a thing. How could I?"

"But you will think of it? Dear—you will try to care for me," he said—and his voice grew deeper, tenderer. "I know that I must seem very old, and grave, and stern, to a young thing like you! But I would try to change—to be different. Perhaps you think it is only the dregs of my heart I am offering you. But it is not so. It is the love of my manhood—"

"Ah don't—*don't* speak of it!" she interrupted him in great distress. "I don't love you. I can't marry you. *Please* don't say any more about it."

He drew a sharp inward breath.

"Don't answer me now," he said quietly. "Wait—until to-morrow. Take time to think. To-morrow—you will answer me."

She felt his lips touch her hand. Then she heard the door open and shut, and the echo of his footsteps die away on the stairs.

Left alone, she sat down again in a kind of bewildered dream.

Of course she did not love Mr. Treherne—never could love him. Therefore of course she could not marry him. And yet—she respected him very much. She felt sure he was good, and honourable and true. A woman's happiness would be safe enough in his keeping.

If she married him, that terrible spectre she had grown to dread—the spectre of homeless, wandering poverty—would be laid for ever.

Do not judge her hardly, my readers, if I tell you that she was tempted to do what has wrecked the lives of countless lonely, poverty-stricken women—to marry *for a home*.

Remember she was alone in the world—almost friendless. Remember she had had a bitter cruel taste of poverty. Remember that in spite of her love for Douglas, she never dreamt of that love being returned. Nay, more, she had almost embraced the certainty that her former idol was unworthy. Above all, she did not realize—what pure innocent girl does realize? *can* realize?—the hideousness of marriage unconsecrated by love. Into her lonely young life had come once more the blessed knowledge that some one wanted her. She could make this good honourable man's life happy. She could care for his motherless little ones. They loved her already—

The fire sank lower and lower. No sound broke the stillness of the quiet schoolroom. The slender little figure sat there for a long, long time—its head on its hand, its grave sad eyes gazing into the dying embers.

(To be concluded.)